

















BY JOHN FOX, JR.

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ERSKINE DALE—PIONEER

THE HEART OF THE HILLS

THE TRAIL OF THE LONESOME PINE

THE LITTLE SHEPHERD OF KINGDOM  
COME

CRITTENDEN. A Kentucky Story of Love and  
War

THE KENTUCKIANS AND A KNIGHT OF  
THE CUMBERLAND

A MOUNTAIN EUROPA AND A CUMBER-  
LAND VENDETTA

CHRISTMAS EVE ON LONESOME, HELL-FER-  
SARTAIN AND IN HAPPY VALLEY

BLUE GRASS AND RHODODENDRON  
Outdoor Life in Kentucky

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CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

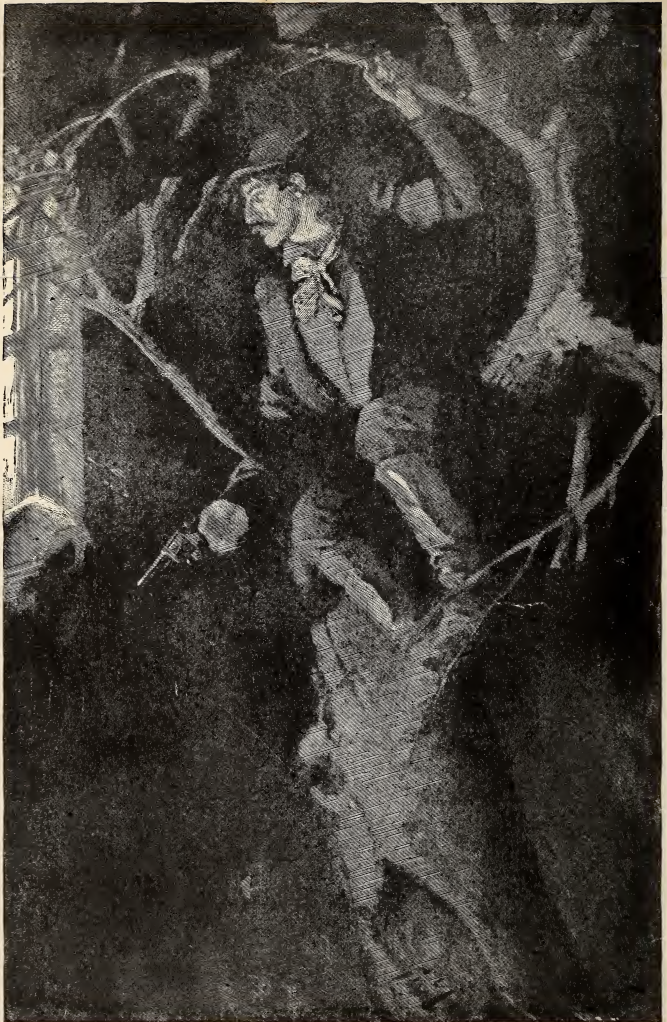
CHRISTMAS EVE  
ON LONESOME  
"HELL-FER-SARTAIN"  
IN HAPPY VALLEY



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Buck saw the shadowed gesture of an arm, and cocked his pistol.

CHRISTMAS EVE  
ON LONESOME  
"HELL-FER-SARTAIN"  
IN HAPPY VALLEY

BY  
JOHN FOX, JR.

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# CONTENTS

## CHRISTMAS EVE ON LONESOME AND OTHER STORIES

PAGE

CHRISTMAS EVE ON LONESOME . . . .	3
THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN . . . .	10
THE PARDON OF BECKY DAY . . . .	46
A CRISIS FOR THE GUARD . . . .	58
CHRISTMAS NIGHT WITH SATAN . . . .	76

## “HELL-FER-SARTAIN”

ON HELL-FER-SARTAIN CREEK . . . .	99
THROUGH THE GAP . . . . .	102
A TRICK O' TRADE . . . . .	106
GRAYSON'S BABY . . . . .	109
COURTIN' ON CUTSHIN . . . . .	116
THE MESSAGE IN THE SAND . . . . .	122
THE SENATOR'S LAST TRADE . . . . .	125

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# CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREACHIN' ON KINGDOM-COME . . . .	129
THE PASSING OF ABRAHAM SHIVERS . . . .	134
A PURPLE RHODODENDRON . . . . .	137
<b>IN HAPPY VALLEY</b>	
THE COURTSHIP OF ALLAPHAIR . . . . .	155
THE COMPACT OF CHRISTOPHER . . . . .	170
THE LORD'S OWN LEVEL . . . . .	179
THE MARQUISE OF QUEENSBERRY . . . . .	188
HIS LAST CHRISTMAS GIFT . . . . .	209
THE ANGEL FROM VIPER . . . . .	214
THE POPE OF THE BIG SANDY . . . . .	222
THE GODDESS OF HAPPY VALLEY . . . . .	231
THE BATTLE-PRAYER OF PARSON SMALL . . . . .	257
THE CHRISTMAS TREE ON PIGEON . . . . .	265



## ILLUSTRATIONS

Buck saw the shadowed gesture of an arm, and cocked his pistol . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
Captain Wells descended with no little majesty and "biffed" him . . . . .	20
"Speak up, nigger!" . . . . .	40
Satan would drop the coin and get a ball for him- self . . . . .	78
"You got him down!" she cried. "Jump on him an' stomp him!" . . . . .	168
"You stay hyeh with the baby," he said quietly, "an' I'll take yo' meal home" . . . . .	186
"Let 'em loose!" he yelled. "Git at it, boys! Go fer him, Ham—whoop-ee-ee!" . . . . .	204
"O Lawd . . . hyeh's another who meddles with thy servant and profanes thy day" . . . . .	262



**CHRISTMAS EVE ON LONESOME  
AND OTHER STORIES**

TO  
THOMAS NELSON PAGE

## CHRISTMAS EVE ON LONESOME

**I**T was Christmas Eve on Lonesome. But nobody on Lonesome knew that it was Christmas Eve, although a child of the outer world could have guessed it, even out in those wilds where Lonesome slipped from one lone log cabin high up the steeps, down through a stretch of jungled darkness to another lone cabin at the mouth of the stream.

There was the holy hush in the gray twilight that comes only on Christmas Eve. There were the big flakes of snow that fell as they never fall except on Christmas Eve. There was a snowy man on horseback in a big coat, and with saddle-pockets that might have been bursting with toys for children in the little cabin at the head of the stream.

But not even he knew that it was Christmas Eve. He was thinking of Christmas Eve, but it was of the Christmas Eve of the year before, when he sat in prison with a hundred other men in stripes, and listened to the chaplain talk of peace and good will to all men upon earth, when

## CHRISTMAS EVE ON LONESOME

he had forgotten all men upon earth but one, and had only hatred in his heart for him.

“Vengeance is mine! saith the Lord.”

That was what the chaplain had thundered at him. And then, as now, he thought of the enemy who had betrayed him to the law, and had sworn away his liberty, and had robbed him of everything in life except a fierce longing for the day when he could strike back and strike to kill. And then, while he looked back hard into the chaplain’s eyes, and now, while he splashed through the yellow mud thinking of that Christmas Eve, Buck shook his head; and then, as now, his sullen heart answered:

“Mine!”

The big flakes drifted to crotch and twig and limb. They gathered on the brim of Buck’s slouch hat, filled out the wrinkles in his big coat, whitened his hair and his long mustache, and sifted into the yellow, twisting path that guided his horse’s feet.

High above he could see through the whirling snow now and then the gleam of a red star. He knew it was the light from his enemy’s window; but somehow the chaplain’s voice kept ringing in his ears, and every time he saw the light he couldn’t help thinking of the story of the Star that the chaplain told that Christmas Eve, and he dropped his eyes by and by, so as



## CHRISTMAS EVE ON LONESOME

not to see it again, and rode on until the light shone in his face.

Then he led his horse up a little ravine and hitched it among the snowy holly and rhododendrons, and slipped toward the light. There was a dog somewhere, of course; and like a thief he climbed over the low rail-fence and stole through the tall snow-wet grass until he leaned against an apple-tree with the sill of the window two feet above the level of his eyes.

Reaching above him, he caught a stout limb and dragged himself up to a crotch of the tree. A mass of snow slipped softly to the earth. The branch creaked above the light wind; around the corner of the house a dog growled and he sat still.

He had waited three long years and he had ridden two hard nights and lain out two cold days in the woods for this.

And presently he reached out very carefully, and noiselessly broke leaf and branch and twig until a passage was cleared for his eye and for the point of the pistol that was gripped in his right hand.

A woman was just disappearing through the kitchen door, and he peered cautiously and saw nothing but darting shadows. From one corner a shadow loomed suddenly out in human shape. Buck saw the shadowed gesture of an

## CHRISTMAS EVE ON LONESOME

arm, and he cocked his pistol. That shadow was his man, and in a moment he would be in a chair in the chimney corner to smoke his pipe, maybe—his last pipe.

Buck smiled—pure hatred made him smile—but it was mean, a mean and sorry thing to shoot this man in the back, dog though he was; and now that the moment had come a wave of sickening shame ran through Buck. No one of his name had ever done that before; but this man and his people had, and with their own lips they had framed palliation for him. What was fair for one was fair for the other they always said. A poor man couldn't fight money in the courts; and so they had shot from the brush, and that was why they were rich now and Buck was poor—why his enemy was safe at home, and he was out here, homeless, in the apple-tree.

Buck thought of all this, but it was no use. The shadow slouched suddenly and disappeared; and Buck was glad. With a gritting oath between his chattering teeth he pulled his pistol in and thrust one leg down to swing from the tree—he would meet him face to face next day and kill him like a man—and there he hung as rigid as though the cold had suddenly turned him, blood, bones, and marrow, into ice.

The door had opened, and full in the firelight stood the girl who he had heard was dead. He

## CHRISTMAS EVE ON LONESOME

knew now how and why that word was sent him. And now she who had been his sweetheart stood before him—the wife of the man he meant to kill.

Her lips moved—he thought he could tell what she said: “Git up, Jim, git up!” Then she went back.

A flame flared up within him now that must have come straight from the devil’s forge. Again the shadows played over the ceiling. His teeth grated as he cocked his pistol, and pointed it down the beam of light that shot into the heart of the apple-tree, and waited.

The shadow of a head shot along the rafters and over the fireplace. It was a madman clutching the butt of the pistol now, and as his eye caught the glinting sight and his heart thumped, there stepped into the square light of the window—a child!

It was a boy with yellow tumbled hair, and he had a puppy in his arms. In front of the fire the little fellow dropped the dog, and they began to play.

“Yap! yap! yap!”

Buck could hear the shrill barking of the fat little dog, and the joyous shrieks of the child as he made his playfellow chase his tail round and round or tumbled him head over heels on the floor. It was the first child Buck had seen for

## CHRISTMAS EVE ON LONESOME

three years; it was *his* child and *hers*; and, in the apple-tree, Buck watched fixedly.

They were down on the floor now, rolling over and over together; and he watched them until the child grew tired and turned his face to the fire and lay still—looking into it. Buck could see his eyes close presently, and then the puppy crept closer, put his head on his play-mate's chest, and the two lay thus asleep.

And still Buck looked—his clasp loosening on his pistol and his lips loosening under his stiff mustache—and kept looking until the door opened again and the woman crossed the floor. A flood of light flashed suddenly on the snow, barely touching the snow-hung tips of the apple-tree, and he saw her in the doorway—saw her look anxiously into the darkness—look and listen a long while.

Buck dropped noiselessly to the snow when she closed the door. He wondered what they would think when they saw his tracks in the snow next morning; and then he realized that they would be covered before morning.

As he started up the ravine where his horse was he heard the clink of metal down the road and the splash of a horse's hoofs in the soft mud, and he sank down behind a holly-bush.

Again the light from the cabin flashed out on the snow.

## CHRISTMAS EVE ON LONESOME

“ That you, Jim? ”

“ Yep! ”

And then the child's voice: “ Has oo dot thum tandy? ”

“ Yep! ”

The cheery answer rang out almost at Buck's ear, and Jim passed death waiting for him behind the bush which his left foot brushed, shaking the snow from the red berries down on the crouching figure beneath.

Once only, far down the dark jungled way, with the underlying streak of yellow that was leading him whither, God only knew—once only Buck looked back. There was the red light gleaming faintly through the moonlit flakes of snow. Once more he thought of the Star, and once more the chaplain's voice came back to him.

“ Mine! ” saith the Lord.

Just how, Buck could not see with himself in the snow and *him* back there for life with her and the child, but some strange impulse made him bare his head.

“ Yourn,” said Buck grimly.

But nobody on Lonesome—not even Buck—knew that it was Christmas Eve.



## THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

### I

**T**HE dreaded message had come. The lank messenger, who had brought it from over Black Mountain, dropped into a chair by the stove and sank his teeth into a great hunk of yellow cheese. "Flitter Bill" Richmond waddled from behind his counter, and out on the little platform in front of his cross-roads store. Out there was a group of earth-stained countrymen, lounging against the rickety fence or swinging on it, their heels clear of the ground, all whittling, chewing, and talking the matter over. All looked up at Bill, and he looked down at them, running his eye keenly from one to another until he came to one powerful young fellow loosely bent over a wagon-tongue. Even on him, Bill's eyes stayed but a moment, and then were lifted higher in anxious thought.

The message had come at last, and the man who brought it had heard it fall from Black Tom's own lips. The "wild Jay-Hawkers of Kaintuck" were coming over into Virginia to



## THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

get Flitter Bill's store, for they were mountain Unionists and Bill was a valley rebel and lawful prey. It was past belief. So long had he prospered, and so well, that Bill had come to feel that he sat safe in the hollow of God's hand. But he now must have protection—and at once—from the hand of man.

Roaring Fork sang lustily through the rhododendrons. To the north yawned "the Gap" through the Cumberland Mountains. "Callahan's Nose," a huge gray rock, showed plain in the clear air, high above the young foliage, and under it, and on up the rocky chasm, flashed Flitter Bill's keen mind, reaching out for help.

Now, from Virginia to Alabama the Southern mountaineer was a Yankee, because the national spirit of 1776, getting fresh impetus in 1812 and new life from the Mexican War, had never died out in the hills. Most likely it would never have died out, anyway; for, the world over, any seed of character, individual or national, that is once dropped between lofty summits brings forth its kind, with deathless tenacity, year after year. Only, in the Kentucky mountains, there were more slaveholders than elsewhere in the mountains in the South. These, naturally, fought for their slaves, and the division thus made the war personal and terrible between the slaveholders who dared to stay

## THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

at home, and the Union, "Home Guards" who organized to drive them away. In Bill's little Virginia valley, of course, most of the sturdy farmers had shouldered Confederate muskets and gone to the war. Those who had stayed at home were, like Bill, Confederate in sympathy, but they lived in safety down the valley, while Bill traded and fattened just opposite the Gap, through which a wild road ran over into the wild Kentucky hills. Therein Bill's danger lay; for, just at this time, the Harlan Home Guard under Black Tom, having cleared those hills, were making ready, like the Pict and Scot of olden days, to descend on the Virginia valley and smite the lowland rebels at the mouth of the Gap. Of the "stay-at-homes," and the deserters roundabout, there were many, very many, who would "stand in" with any man who would keep their bellies full, but they were well-nigh worthless even with a leader, and, without a leader, of no good at all. Flitter Bill must find a leader for them, and anywhere than in his own fat self, for a leader of men Bill was not born to be, nor could he see a leader among the men before him. And so, standing there one early morning in the spring of 1865, with uplifted gaze, it was no surprise to him—the coincidence, indeed, became at once one of the articles of perfect faith in his own star—that he

## THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

should see afar off, a black slouch hat and a jogging gray horse rise above a little knoll that was in line with the mouth of the Gap. At once he crossed his hands over his chubby stomach with a pious sigh, and at once a plan of action began to whirl in his little round head. Before man and beast were in full view the work was done, the hands were unclasped, and Flitter Bill, with a chuckle, had slowly risen, and was waddling back to his desk in the store.

It was a pompous old buck who was bearing down on the old gray horse, and under the slouch hat with its flapping brim—one Mayhall Wells, by name. There were but few strands of gray in his thick blue-black hair, though his years were rounding half a century, and he sat the old nag with erect dignity and perfect ease. His bearded mouth showed vanity immeasurable, and suggested a strength of will that his eyes—the real seat of power—denied, for, while shrewd and keen, they were unsteady. In reality, he was a great coward, though strong as an ox, and whipping with ease every man who could force him into a fight. So that, in the whole man, a sensitive observer would have felt a peculiar pathos, as though nature had given him a desire to be, and no power to become, and had then sent him on his zigzag way, never to dream wherein his trouble lay.

## THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

“ Mornin', gentlemen! ”

“ Mornin', Mayhall! ”

All nodded and spoke except Hence Sturgill on the wagon-tongue, who stopped whittling, and merely looked at the big man with narrowing eyes.

Tallow Dick, a yellow slave, appeared at the corner of the store, and the old buck beckoned him to come and hitch his horse. Flitter Bill had reappeared on the stoop with a piece of white paper in his hand. The lank messenger sagged in the doorway behind him, ready to start for home.

“ Mornin' *Captain* Wells,” said Bill, with great respect. Every man heard the title, stopped his tongue and his knife-blade, and raised his eyes; a few smiled—Hence Sturgill grinned. Mayhall stared, and Bill's left eye closed and opened with lightning quickness in a most portentous wink. Mayhall straightened his shoulders—seeing the game, as did the crowd at once: Flitter Bill was impressing that messenger in case he had some dangerous card up his sleeve.

“ *Captain* Wells,” Bill repeated significantly, “ I'm sorry to say yo' new uniform has not arrived yet. I am expecting it to-morrow.” Mayhall toed the line with soldierly promptness.

“ Well, I'm sorry to hear that, suh—sorry to

## THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

hear it, suh," he said, with slow, measured speech. "My men are comin' in fast, and you can hardly realize er—er what it means to an old soldier er—er not to have—er—" And Mayhall's answering wink was portentous.

"My friend here is from over in Kaintucky, and the Harlan Home Gyard over there, he says, is a-making some threats."

Mayhall laughed.

"So I have heerd—so I have heerd." He turned to the messenger. "We shall be ready fer 'em, suh, ready fer 'em with a thousand men—one thousand men, suh, right hyeh in the Gap—right hyeh in the Gap. Let 'em come on—let 'em come on!" Mayhall began to rub his hands together as though the conflict were close at hand, and the mountaineer slapped one thigh heartily. "Good for you! Give 'em hell!" He was about to slap Mayhall on the shoulder and call him "pardner," when Flitter Bill coughed, and Mayhall lifted his chin.

"Captain Wells?" said Bill.

"Captain Wells," repeated Mayhall with a stiff salutation, and the messenger from over Black Mountain fell back with an apologetic laugh. A few minutes later both Mayhall and Flitter Bill saw him shaking his head, as he started homeward toward the Gap. Bill laughed silently, but Mayhall had grown grave. The



## THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

fun was over and he beckoned Bill inside the store.

“ Misto Richmond,” he said, with hesitancy and an entire change of tone and manner, “ I am afeerd I ain’t goin’ to be able to pay you that little amount I owe you, but if you can give me a little mo’ time——”

“ Captain Wells,” interrupted Bill slowly, and again Mayhall stared hard at him, “ as betwixt friends, as have been pussonal friends fer nigh onto twenty year, I hope you won’t mention that little matter to me ag’in—until I mentions it to you.”

“ But, Misto Richmond, Hence Sturgill out thar says as how he heerd you say that if I didn’t pay——”

“ *Captain Wells,*” interrupted Bill again and again Mayhall stared hard—it was strange that Bill could have formed the habit of calling him “ Captain ” in so short a time—“ yestiddy is not to-day, is it? And to-day is not to-morrow? I axe you—have I said one word about that little matter *to-day?* Well, borrow not from yestiddy nor to-morrow, to make trouble fer to-day. There is other things fer to-day, Captain Wells.”

Mayhall turned here.

“ Misto Richmond,” he said, with great earnestness, “ you may not know it, but three times

## THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

since thet long-legged jay-hawker's been gone you hev plainly—and if my ears do not deceive me, an' they never hev—you have plainly called me '*Captain Wells.*' I knowed yo' little trick whilst he was hyeh, fer I knowed whut the feller had come to tell ye; but since he's been gone, three times, Misto Richmond——”

“Yes,” drawled Bill, with an unctious that was strangely sweet to Mayhall's wondering ears, “an' I do it ag'in, *Captain Wells.*”

“An' may I axe you,” said Mayhall, ruffling a little, “may I axe you—why you——”

“Certainly,” said Bill, and he handed over the paper that he held in his hand.

Mayhall took the paper and looked it up and down helplessly—Flitter Bill slyly watching him.

Mayhall handed it back. “If you please, Misto Richmond—I left my specs at home.” Without a smile, Bill began. It was an order from the commandant at Cumberland Gap, sixty miles farther down Powell's Valley, authorizing Mayhall Wells to form a company to guard the Gap and to protect the property of Confederate citizens in the valley; and a commission of captaincy in the said company for the said Mayhall Wells. Mayhall's mouth widened to the full stretch of his lean jaws, and, when Bill was through reading, he silently

## THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

reached for the paper and looked it up and down and over and over, muttering:

“ Well—well—well! ” And then he pointed silently to the name that was at the bottom of the paper.

Bill spelled out the name:

“ *Jefferson Davis,* ” and Mayhall’s big fingers trembled as he pulled them away, as though to avoid further desecration of that sacred name.

Then he rose, and a magical transformation began that can be likened—I speak with reverence—to the turning of water into wine. Captain Mayhall Wells raised his head, set his chin well in, and kept it there. He straightened his shoulders, and kept them straight. He paced the floor with a tread that was martial, and once he stopped before the door with his right hand thrust under his breast-pocket, and with wrinkling brow studied the hills. It was a new man—with the water in his blood changed to wine—who turned suddenly on Flitter Bill Richmond:

“ I can collect a vehy large force in a vehy few days. ” Flitter Bill knew that—that he could get together every loafer between the county-seat of Wise and the county-seat of Lee—but he only said encouragingly:

“ Good! ”

“ An’ we air to perpect the property—I am to



## THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

perfect the property of the Confederate citizens of the valley—that means *you*, Misto Richmond, and *this store*.”

Bill nodded.

Mayhall coughed slightly. “There is one thing in the way, I opine. Whar—I axe you—air we to git somethin’ to eat fer my command?” Bill had anticipated this.

“I’ll take keer o’ that.”

Captain Wells rubbed his hands.

“Of co’se, of co’se—you are a soldier and a patriot—you can afford to feed ’em as a slight return fer the pertection I shall give you and yourn.”

“Certainly,” agreed Bill dryly, and with a prophetic stir of uneasiness.

“Vehy—vehy well. I shall begin *now*, Misto Richmond.” And, to Flitter Bill’s wonder, the captain stalked out to the stoop, announced his purpose with the voice of an auctioneer, and called for volunteers then and there. There was dead silence for a moment. Then there was a smile here, a chuckle there, an incredulous laugh, and Hence Sturgill, “bully of the Pocket,” rose from the wagon-tongue, closed his knife, came slowly forward, and cackled his scorn straight up into the teeth of Captain Mayhall Wells. The captain looked down and began to shed his coat.

## THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

“ I take it, Hence Sturgill, that you air laughin’ at me? ”

“ I am a-laughin’ at *you*, Mayhall Wells,” he said, contemptuously, but he was surprised at the look on the good-natured giant’s face.

“ *Captain* Mayhall Wells, ef you please.”

“ Plain ole Mayhall Wells,” said Hence, and Captain Wells descended with no little majesty and “ biffed ” him.

The delighted crowd rose to its feet and gathered around. Tallow Dick came running from the barn. It was biff—biff, and biff again, but not nip and tuck for long. Captain Mayhall closed in. Hence Sturgill struck the earth like a Homeric pine, and the captain’s mighty arm played above him and fell, resounding. In three minutes Hence, to the amazement of the crowd, roared:

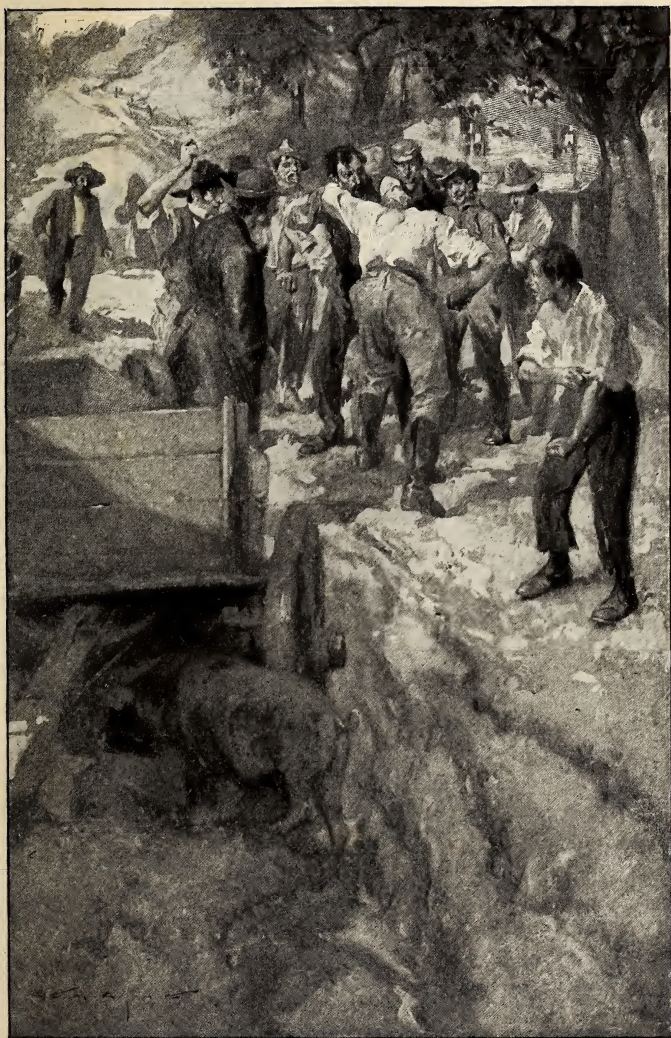
“ ’Nough! ”

But Mayhall breathed hard and said quietly:

“ *Captain* Wells!”

Hence shouted, “ Plain ole—” But the captain’s huge fist was poised in the air over his face.

“ Captain Wells,” he growled, and the captain rose and calmly put on his coat, while the crowd looked respectful, and Hence Sturgill staggered to one side, as though beaten in spirit, strength, and wits as well. The captain beck-



Captain Wells descended with no little majesty and "biffed" him.



## THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

oned Flitter Bill inside the store. His manner had a distinct savor of patronage.

“ Misto Richmond,” he said, “ I make you—I appoint you, by the authority of Jefferson Davis and the Confederate States of Ameriky, as commissary-gineral of the Army of the Callahan.”

“ As *what?* ” Bill’s eyes blinked at the astounding dignity of his commission.

“ Gineral Richmond, I shall not repeat them words.” And he didn’t, but rose and made his way toward his old gray mare. Tallow Dick held his bridle.

“ Dick,” he said jocosely, “ goin’ to run away ag’in?” The negro almost paled, and then, with a look at a blacksnake whip that hung on the barn door, grinned.

“ No, suh—no, suh—’deed I ain’t, suh—no mo’.”

Mounted, the captain dropped a three-cent silver piece in the startled negro’s hand. Then he vouchsafed the wondering Flitter Bill and the gaping crowd a military salute and started for the yawning mouth of the Gap—riding with shoulders squared and chin well in—riding as should ride the commander of the Army of the Callahan.

Flitter Bill dropped his blinking eyes to the paper in his hand that bore the commission of



## THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

Jefferson Davis and the Confederate States of America to Mayhall Wells of Callahan, and went back into his store. He looked at it a long time and then he laughed, but without much mirth.

## II

**G**RASS had little chance to grow for three weeks thereafter under the cowhide boots of Captain Mayhall Wells. When the twentieth morning came over the hills, the mist parted over the Stars and Bars floating from the top of a tall poplar up through the Gap and flaunting brave defiance to Black Tom, his Harlan Home Guard, and all other jay-hawking Unionists of the Kentucky hills. It parted over the Army of the Callahan asleep on its arms in the mouth of the chasm, over Flitter Bill sitting, sullen and dejected, on the stoop of his store; and over Tallow Dick stealing corn bread from the kitchen to make ready for flight that night through the Gap, the mountains, and to the yellow river that was the Mecca of the runaway slave.

At the mouth of the Gap a ragged private stood before a ragged tent, raised a long dinner horn to his lips, and a mighty blast rang through the hills, reveille! And out poured the Army of the Callahan from shack, rock-cave, and coverts of sticks and leaves, with squirrel rifles,

## THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

Revolutionary muskets, shotguns, clasp-knives, and horse pistols for the duties of the day under Lieutenant Skaggs, tactician, and Lieutenant Boggs, quondam terror of Roaring Fork.

That blast rang down the valley into Flitter Bill's ears and startled him into action. It brought Tallow Dick's head out of the barn door and made him grin.

"Dick!" Flitter Bill's call was sharp and angry.

"Yes, suh!"

"Go tell ole Mayhall Wells that I ain't goin' to send him nary another pound o' bacon an' nary another tin cup o' meal—no, by ——, I ain't."

Half an hour later the negro stood before the ragged tent of the commander of the Army of the Callahan.

"Marse Bill say he ain't gwine to sen' you no mo' rations—no mo'."

"*What!*"

Tallow Dick repeated his message and the captain scowled—mutiny!

"Fetch my hoss!" he thundered.

Very naturally and very swiftly had the trouble come, for straight after the captain's fight with Hence Sturgill there had been a mighty rally to the standard of Mayhall Wells. From



## THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

Pigeon's Creek the loafers came—from Roaring Fork, Cracker's Neck, from the Pocket down the valley, and from Turkey Cove. Recruits came so fast, and to such proportions grew the Army of the Callahan, that Flitter Bill shrewdly suggested at once that Captain Wells divide it into three companies and put one up Pigeon's Creek under Lieutenant Jim Skaggs and one on Callahan under Lieutenant Tom Boggs, while the captain, with a third, should guard the mouth of the Gap. Bill's idea was to share with those districts the honor of his commissary-generalship; but Captain Wells crushed the plan like a dried puffball.

“Yes,” he said, with fine sarcasm. “What will them Kanetuckians do then? Don't you know, General Richmond? Why, I'll tell you what they'll do. They'll jest swoop down on Lieutenant Boggs and gobble him up. Then they'll swoop down on Lieutenant Skaggs on Pigeon and gobble him up. Then they'll swoop down on me and gobble me up. No, they won't gobble *me* up, but they'll come damn nigh it. An' what kind of a report will I make to Jeff Davis, General Richmond? *Captured in detail*, suh? No, suh. I'll jest keep Lieutenant Boggs and Lieutenant Skaggs close by me, and we'll pitch our camp right here in the Gap whar we can perfect the property of Confederate citizens

## THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

and be close to our base o' supplies, suh. That's what I'll do!"

"General Richmond" groaned, and when in the next breath the mighty captain casually inquired if *that uniform of his* had come yet, Flitter Bill's fat body nearly rolled off his chair.

"You will please have it here next Monday," said the captain, with great firmness. "It is necessary to the proper discipline of my troops." And it was there the following Monday—a regimental coat, gray jeans trousers, and a forage cap that Bill purchased from a passing Morgan raider. Daily orders would come from Captain Wells to General Flitter Bill Richmond to send up more rations, and Bill groaned afresh when a man from Callahan told how the captain's family was sprucing up on meal and flour and bacon from the captain's camp. Humiliation followed. It had never occurred to Captain Wells that being a captain made it incongruous for him to have a "general" under him, until Lieutenant Skaggs, who had picked up a manual of tactics somewhere, cautiously communicated his discovery. Captain Wells saw the point at once. There was but one thing to do—to reduce General Richmond to the ranks—and it was done. Technically, thereafter, the general was purveyor for the Army of the Callahan, but

## THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

to the captain himself he was—gallingly to the purveyor—simple Flitter Bill.

The strange thing was that, contrary to his usual shrewdness, it should have taken Flitter Bill so long to see that the difference between having his store robbed by the Kentucky jay-hawkers and looted by Captain Wells was the difference between tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee, but, when he did see, he forged a plan of relief at once. When the captain sent down Lieutenant Boggs for a supply of rations, Bill sent the saltiest, rankest bacon he could find, with a message that he wanted to see the great man. As before, when Captain Wells rode down to the store, Bill handed out a piece of paper, and, as before, the captain had left his "specs" at home. The paper was an order that, whereas the distinguished services of Captain Wells to the Confederacy were appreciated by Jefferson Davis, the said Captain Wells was, and is, hereby empowered to duly, and in accordance with the tactics of war, impress what live-stock he shall see fit and determine fit for the good of his command. The news was joy to the Army of the Callahan. Before it had gone the rounds of the camp Lieutenant Boggs had spied a fat heifer browsing on the edge of the woods and ordered her surrounded and driven down. Without another word, when she was close enough, he

## THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

raised his gun and would have shot her dead in her tracks had he not been arrested by a yell of command and horror from his superior.

“Air you a-goin’ to have me cashiered and shot, Lieutenant Boggs, fer violatin’ the tick-tacks of war?” roared the captain, indignantly. “Don’t you know that I’ve got to *impress* that heifer accordin’ to the rules an’ regulations? Git roun’ that heifer.” The men surrounded her. “Take her by the horns. Now! In the name of Jefferson Davis and the Confederate States of Ameriky, I hereby and hereon do duly impress this heifer for the purposes and use of the Army of the Callahan, so help me God! Shoot her down, Bill Boggs, shoot her down!”

Now, naturally, the soldiers preferred fresh meat, and they got it—impressing cattle, sheep, and hogs, geese, chickens, and ducks, vegetables—nothing escaped the capacious maw of the Army of the Callahan. It was a beautiful idea, and the success of it pleased Flitter Bill mightily, but the relief did not last long. An indignant murmur rose up and down valley and creek bottom against the outrages, and one angry old farmer took a pot-shot at Captain Wells with a squirrel rifle, clipping the visor of his forage cap; and from that day the captain began to call with immutable regularity again on Flitter Bill for bacon and meal. That morning the last

## THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

straw fell in a demand for a wagon-load of rations to be delivered before noon, and, worn to the edge of his patience, Bill had sent a reckless refusal. And now he was waiting on the stoop of his store, looking at the mouth of the Gap and waiting for it to give out into the valley Captain Wells and his old gray mare. And at last, late in the afternoon, there was the captain coming—coming at a swift gallop—and Bill steeled himself for the onslaught like a knight in a joust against a charging antagonist. The captain saluted stiffly—pulling up sharply and making no move to dismount.

“ Purveyor,” he said, “ Black Tom has just sent word that he’s a-comin’ over hyeh this week—have you heerd that, purveyor? ” Bill was silent.

“ Black Tom says you *air* responsible for the Army of the Callahan. Have you heerd that, purveyor? ” Still was there silence.

“ He says he’s a-goin’ to hang me to that popular whar floats them Stars and Bars ”—Captain Mayhall Wells chuckled—“ an’ he says he’s a-goin’ to hang *you* thar fust, though; have you heerd *that*, purveyor? ”

The captain dropped the titular address now, and threw one leg over the pommel of his saddle.

“ Flitter Bill Richmond,” he said, with great nonchalance, “ I axe you—do you prefer that I



## THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

should disband the Army of the Callahan, or do you not?"

"No."

The captain was silent a full minute, and his face grew stern. "Flitter Bill Richmond, I had no idee o' disbandin' the Army of the Callahan, but do you know what I did aim to do?" Again Bill was silent.

"Well, suh, I'll tell you whut I aim to do. If you don't send them rations I'll have you cashiered for mutiny, an' if Black Tom don't hang you to that air poplar, I'll hang you thar myself, suh; yes, by ——! I will. Dick!" he called sharply to the slave. "Hitch up that air wagon, fill hit full o' bacon and meal, and drive it up thar to my tent. An' be mighty damn quick about it, or I'll hang you, too."

The negro gave a swift glance to his master, and Flitter Bill feebly waved acquiescence.

"Purveyor, I wish you good-day."

Bill gazed after the great captain in dazed wonder (was this the man who had come cringing to him only a few short weeks ago?) and groaned aloud.

But for lucky or unlucky coincidence, how could the prophet ever have gained name and fame on earth?

Captain Wells rode back to camp chuckling—

## THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

chuckling with satisfaction and pride; but the chuckle passed when he caught sight of his tent. In front of it were his lieutenants and some half a dozen privates, all plainly in great agitation, and in the midst of them stood the lank messenger who had brought the first message from Black Tom, delivering another from the same source. Black Tom *was* coming, coming sure, and unless that flag, that "Rebel rag," were hauled down under twenty-four hours, Black Tom would come over and pull it down, and to that same poplar hang "Captain Mayhall an' his whole damn army." Black Tom might do it anyhow—just for fun.

While the privates listened the captain strutted and swore; then he rested his hand on his hip and smiled with silent sarcasm, and then swore again—while the respectful lieutenants and the awed soldiery of the Callahan looked on. Finally he spoke.

"Ah—when did Black Tom say that?" he inquired casually.

"Yestiddy mornin'. He said he was goin' to start over hyeh early this mornin'." The captain whirled.

"What? Then why didn't you git over hyeh *this* mornin'?"

"Couldn't git across the river last night."

"Then he's a-comin' to-day?"

## THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

“ I reckon Black Tom’ll be hyeh in about two hours—mebbe he ain’t fer away now.” The captain was startled.

“ Lieutenant Skaggs,” he called, sharply, “ git yo’ men out thar an’ draw ’em up in two rows! ”

The face of the student of military tactics looked horrified. The captain in his excitement had relaxed into language that was distinctly agricultural, and, catching the look on his subordinate’s face, and at the same time the reason for it, he roared, indignantly:

“ Air you afeer’d, sir? Git yo’ men out, I said, an’ march ’em up thar in front of the Gap. Lieutenant Boggs, take ten men an’ march at double quick through the Gap, an’ defend that poplar with yo’ life’s blood. If you air overwhelmed by superior numbers, fall back, suh, step by step, until you air re-enforced by Lieutenant Skaggs. If you two air not able to hold the enemy in check, you may count on me an’ the Army of the Callahan to grind *him*—” (How the captain, now thoroughly aroused to all the fine terms of war, did roll that technical “ him ” under his tongue)—“ to grind him to pieces ag’in them towerin’ rocks, and plunge him in the bilin’ waters of Roarin’ Fawk. Forward, suh—double quick.” Lieutenant Skaggs touched his cap. Lieutenant Boggs looked embarrassed and strode nearer.



## THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

“ Captain, whar am I goin’ to git ten men to face them Kanetuckians? ”

“ Whar air they goin’ to git a off’cer to lead ’em, you’d better say,” said the captain, severely, fearing that some of the soldiers had heard the question. “ If you air afeer’d, suh ”—and then he saw that no one had heard, and he winked—winked with most unmilitary familiarity.

“ Air you a good climber, Lieutenant Boggs? ” Lieutenant Boggs looked mystified, but he said he was.

“ Lieutenant Boggs, I now give you the opportunity to show yo’ profound knowledge of the ticktacks of war. You may now be guilty of disobedience of ordahs, and I will not have you court-martialled for the same. In other words, if, after a survey of the situation, you think best—why,” the captain’s voice dropped to a hoarse whisper, “ pull that flag down, Lieutenant Boggs, pull her down.”

### III

IT was an hour by sun now. Lieutenant Boggs and his devoted band of ten were making their way slowly and watchfully up the mighty chasm—the lieutenant with his hand on his sword and his head bare, and bowed in thought. The Kentuckians were on their way—at that moment they might be riding full speed toward the mouth of Pigeon, where floated the flag. They might gobble him and his command up when they emerged from the Gap. Suppose they caught him up that tree. His command might escape, but *he* would be up there, saving them the trouble of stringing him up. All they would have to do would be to send up after him a man with a rope, and let him drop. That was enough. Lieutenant Boggs called a halt and explained the real purpose of the expedition.

“We will wait here till dark,” he said, “so them Kanetuckians can’t ketch us, whilst we are climbing that tree.”

And so they waited opposite Bee Rock, which was making ready to blossom with purple rho-

## THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

dodendrons. And the reserve back in the Gap, under Lieutenant Skaggs, waited. Waited, too, the Army of the Callahan at the mouth of the Gap, and waited restlessly Captain Wells at the door of his tent, and Flitter Bill on the stoop of his store—waited everybody but Tallow Dick, who, in the general confusion, was slipping through the rhododendrons along the bank of Roaring Fork, until he could climb the mountain-side and slip through the Gap high over the army's head.

What could have happened?

When dusk was falling, Captain Wells dispatched a messenger to Lieutenant Skaggs and his reserve, and got an answer; Lieutenant Skaggs feared that Boggs had been captured without the firing of a single shot—but the flag was floating still. An hour later, Lieutenant Skaggs sent another message—he could not see the flag. Captain Wells answered, stoutly:

“Hold yo' own.”

And so, as darkness fell, the Army of the Callahan waited in the strain of mortal expectancy as one man; and Flitter Bill waited, with his horse standing saddled in the barn, ready for swift flight. And, as darkness fell, Tallow Dick was cautiously picking his way alongside the steep wall of the Gap toward freedom, and picking it with stealthy caution, foot by foot;

## THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

for up there, to this day, big loose rocks mount halfway to the jagged points of the black cliffs, and a careless step would have detached one and sent an avalanche of rumbling stones down to betray him. A single shot rang suddenly out far up through the Gap, and the startled negro sprang forward, slipped, and, with a low, frightened oath, lay still. Another shot followed, and another. Then a hoarse murmur rose, loudened into thunder, and ended in a frightful—boom! One yell rang from the army's throat:

“The Kentuckians! The Kentuckians! The wild, long-haired, terrible Kentuckians!”

Captain Wells sprang into the air.

“My God, they've got a cannon!”

Then there was a martial chorus—the crack of rifle, the hoarse cough of horse-pistol, the roar of old muskets.

“Bing! Bang! Boom! Bing—bing! Bang—bang! Boom—boom! Bing—bang—boom!”

Lieutenant Skaggs and his reserves heard the beat of running feet down the Gap.

“They've gobbled Boggs,” he said, and the reserve rushed after him as he fled. The army heard the beat of their coming feet.

“They've gobbled Skaggs,” the army said.

Then was there bedlam as the army fled—a crashing through bushes—a splashing into the river, the rumble of mule wagons, yells of ter-

## THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

ror, swift flying shapes through the pale moonlight. Flitter Bill heard the din as he stood by his barn door.

“They’ve gobbled the army,” said Flitter Bill, and he, too, fled like a shadow down the valley.

Nature never explodes such wild and senseless energy as when she lets loose a mob in a panic. With the army, it was each man for himself and devil take the hindmost; and the flight of the army was like a flight from the very devil himself. Lieutenant Boggs, whose feet were the swiftest in the hills, outstripped his devoted band. Lieutenant Skaggs, being fat and slow, fell far behind his reserve, and dropped exhausted on a rock for a moment to get his breath. As he rose, panting, to resume flight, a figure bounded out of the darkness behind him, and he gathered it in silently and went with it to the ground, where both fought silently in the dust until they rolled into the moonlight and each looked the other in the face.

“That you, Jim Skaggs?”

“That you, Tom Boggs?”

Then the two lieutenants rose swiftly, but a third shape bounded into the road—a gigantic figure—Black Tom! With a startled yell they gathered him in—one by the waist, the other about the neck, and, for a moment, the terrible



## THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

Kentuckian—it could be none other—swung the two clear of the ground, but the doughty lieutenants hung to him. Boggs trying to get his knife and Skaggs his pistol, and all went down in a heap.

“I surrender—I surrender!” It was the giant who spoke, and at the sound of his voice both men ceased to struggle, and, strange to say, no one of the three laughed.

“Lieutenant Boggs,” said Captain Wells, thickly, “take yo’ thumb out o’ my mouth. Lieutenant Skaggs, leggo my leg an’ stop bitin’ me.”

“Sh—sh—sh—” said all three.

The faint swish of bushes as Lieutenant Boggs’s ten men scuttled into the brush behind them—the distant beat of the army’s feet getting fainter ahead of them, and then silence—dead, dead silence.

“Sh—sh—sh!”

\* \* \* \* \*

With the red streaks of dawn Captain Mayhall Wells was pacing up and down in front of Flitter Bill’s store, a gaping crowd about him, and the shattered remnants of the army drawn up along Roaring Fork in the rear. An hour later Flitter Bill rode calmly in.

“I stayed all night down the valley,” said Flitter Bill. “Uncle Jim Richmond was sick.

## THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

I hear you had some trouble last night, Captain Wells." The captain expanded his chest.

"Trouble!" he repeated, sarcastically. And then he told how a charging horde of dare-devils had driven him from camp with overwhelming numbers and one piece of artillery; how he had rallied the army and fought them back, foot by foot, and put them to fearful rout; how the army had fallen back again just when the Kentuckians were running like sheep, and how he himself had stayed in the rear with Lieutenant Boggs and Lieutenant Skaggs, "to cover their retreat, suh," and how the purveyor, if he would just go up through the Gap, would doubtless find the cannon that the enemy had left behind in their flight. It was just while he was thus telling the tale for the twentieth time that two figures appeared over the brow of the hill and drew near—Hence Sturgill on horseback and Tallow Dick on foot.

"I ketched this nigger in my corn-fiel' this mornin'," said Hence, simply, and Flitter Bill glared, and without a word went for the blacksnake ox-whip that hung by the barn door.

For the twenty-first time Captain Wells started his tale again, and with every pause that he made for breath Hence cackled scorn.

"An', Hence Sturgill, et you will jus' go up

## THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

in the Gap you'll find a cannon, captured, suh, by me an' the Army of the Callahan, an'——"

"Cannon!" Hence broke in. "Speak up, nigger!" And Tallow Dick spoke up—grinning:

"I done it!"

"What!" shouted Flitter Bill.

"I kicked a rock loose climbin' over Callahan's Nose."

Bill dropped his whip with a chuckle of pure ecstasy. Mayhall paled and stared. The crowd roared, the Army of the Callahan grinned, and Hence climbed back on his horse.

"Mayhall Wells," he said, "plain ole Mayhall Wells, I'll see you on Couht Day. I ain't got time now."

And he rode away.





“Speak up, nigger!”



## IV

**T**HAT day Captain Mayhall Wells and the Army of the Callahan were in disrepute. Next day the awful news of Lee's surrender came. Captain Wells refused to believe it, and still made heroic effort to keep his shattered command together. Looking for recruits on Court Day, he was twitted about the rout of the army by Hence Sturgill, whose long-coveted chance to redeem himself had come. Again, as several times before, the captain declined to fight—his health was essential to the general well-being—but Hence laughed in his face, and the captain had to face the music, though the heart of him was gone.

He fought well, for he was fighting for his all, and he knew it. He could have whipped with ease, and he did whip, but the spirit of the thoroughbred was not in Captain Mayhall Wells. He had Sturgill down, but Hence sank his teeth into Mayhall's thigh while Mayhall's hands grasped his opponent's throat. The captain had only to squeeze, as every rough-and-tumble fighter knew, and endure his pain until

## THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

Hence would have to give in. But Mayhall was not built to endure. He roared like a bull as soon as the teeth met in his flesh, his fingers relaxed, and to the disgusted surprise of everybody he began to roar with great distinctness and agony:

“ ’Nough! ’Nough! ”

The end was come, and nobody knew it better than Mayhall Wells. He rode home that night with hands folded on the pommel of his saddle and his beard crushed by his chin against his breast. For the last time, next morning he rode down to Flitter Bill’s store. On the way he met Parson Kilburn and for the last time Mayhall Wells straightened his shoulders and for one moment more resumed his part: perhaps the parson had not heard of his fall.

“ Good-mornin’, parsing,” he said, pleasantly. “ Ah—where have you been? ” The parson was returning from Cumberland Gap, whither he had gone to take the oath of allegiance.

“ By the way, I have something here for you which Flitter Bill asked me to give you. He said it was from the commandant at Cumberland Gap.”

“ Fer me? ” asked the captain—hope springing anew in his heart. The parson handed him a letter. Mayhall looked at it upside down.

## THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

"If you please, parsing," he said, handing it back, "I hev left my specs at home."

The parson read that, whereas Captain Wells had been guilty of grave misdemeanors while in command of the Army of the Callahan, he should be arrested and court-martialled for the same, or be given the privilege of leaving the county in twenty-four hours. Mayhall's face paled a little and he stroked his beard.

"Ah—does anybody but you know about this ordah, parsing?"

"Nobody."

"Well, if you will do me the great favor, parsing, of not mentioning it to nary a living soul—as fer me and my ole gray hoss and my household furniture—we'll be in Kanetuck afore daybreak to-morrow mornin'!" And he was.

But he rode on just then and presented himself for the last time at the store of Flitter Bill. Bill was sitting on the stoop in his favorite posture. And in a moment there stood before him plain Mayhall Wells—holding out the order Bill had given the parson that day.

"Misto Richmond," he said, "I have come to tell you good-by."

Now just above the selfish layers of fat under Flitter Bill's chubby hands was a very kind heart. When he saw Mayhall's old manner and heard the old respectful way of address, and felt the



## THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

dazed helplessness of the big, beaten man, the heart thumped.

“ I am sorry about that little amount I owe you; I think I’ll be able shortly—” But Bill cut him short. Mayhall Wells, beaten, disgraced, driven from home on charge of petty crimes, of which he was undoubtedly guilty, but for which Bill knew he himself was responsible—Mayhall on his way into exile and still persuading himself and, at that moment, almost persuading him that he meant to pay that little debt of long ago—was too much for Flitter Bill, and he proceeded to lie—lying with deliberation and pleasure.

“ Captain Wells,” he said—and the emphasis on the title was balm to Mayhall’s soul—“ you have protected me in time of war, an’ you air welcome to yo’ uniform an’ you air welcome to that little debt. Yes,” he went on, reaching down into his pocket and pulling out a roll of bills, “ I tender you in payment for that same protection the regular pay of a officer in the Confederate service ”—and he handed out the army pay for three months in Confederate greenbacks—“ an’ five dollars in money of the United States, of which I an’, doubtless, you, suh, air true and loyal citizens. Captain Wells, I bid you good-by an’ I wish ye well—I wish ye well.”

## THE ARMY OF THE CALLAHAN

From the stoop of his store Bill watched the captain ride away, drooping at the shoulders, and with his hands folded on the pommel of his saddle—his dim blue eyes misty, the jaunty forage cap a mockery of his iron-gray hair, and the flaps of his coat fanning either side like mournful wings.

And Flitter Bill muttered to himself:

“ Atter he’s gone long enough fer these things to blow over, I’m going to bring him back and give him another chance—yes, damme if I don’t git him back.”

And Bill dropped his remorseful eye to the order in his hand. Like the handwriting of the order that lifted Mayhall like magic into power, the handwriting of this order, that dropped him like a stone—was Flitter Bill’s own.



## THE PARDON OF BECKY DAY

**T**HE missionary was young and she was from the North. Her brows were straight, her nose was rather high, and her eyes were clear and gray. The upper lip of her little mouth was so short that the teeth just under it were never quite concealed. It was the mouth of a child and it gave the face, with all its strength and high purpose, a peculiar pathos that no soul in that little mountain town had the power to see or feel. A yellow mule was hitched to the rickety fence in front of her and she stood on the stoop of a little white frame-house with an elm switch between her teeth and gloves on her hands, which were white and looked strong. The mule wore a man's saddle, but no matter—the streets were full of yellow pools, the mud was ankle-deep, and she was on her way to the sick-bed of Becky Day.

There was a flood that morning. All the preceding day the rains had drenched the high slopes unceasingly. That night, the rain-clear forks of the Kentucky got yellow and rose high,

## THE PARDON OF BECKY DAY

and now they crashed together around the town and, after a heaving conflict, started the river on one quivering, majestic sweep to the sea.

Nobody gave heed that the girl rode a mule or that the saddle was not her own, and both facts she herself quickly forgot. This half log, half frame house on a corner had stood a siege once. She could yet see bullet holes about the door. Through this window, a revenue officer from the Blue Grass had got a bullet in the shoulder from a garden in the rear. Standing in the post-office door only just one month before, she herself had seen children scurrying like rabbits through the back-yard fences, men running silently here and there, men dodging into doorways, fire flashing in the street and from every house—and not a sound but the crack of pistol and Winchester; for the mountain men deal death in all the terrible silence of death. And now a preacher with a long scar across his forehead had come to the one little church in the place and the fervor of religion was struggling with feudal hate for possession of the town. To the girl, who saw a symbol in every mood of the earth, the passions of these primitive people were like the treacherous streams of the uplands—now quiet as sunny skies and now clashing together with but little less fury and with much more noise. And the roar of the flood above

## THE PARDON OF BECKY DAY

the wind that late afternoon was the wrath of the Father, that with the peace of the Son so long on earth, such things still could be. Once more trouble was threatening and that day even she knew that trouble might come, but she rode without fear, for she went when and where she pleased as any woman can, throughout the Cumberland, without insult or harm.

At the end of the street were two houses that seemed to front each other with unmistakable enmity. In them were two men who had wounded each other only the day before, and who that day would lead the factions, if the old feud broke loose again. One house was close to the frothing hem of the flood—a log-hut with a shed of rough boards for a kitchen—the home of Becky Day.

The other was across the way and was framed and smartly painted. On the steps sat a woman with her head bare and her hands under her apron—widow of the Marcum whose death from a bullet one month before had broken the long truce of the feud. A groaning curse was growled from the window as the girl drew near, and she knew it came from a wounded Marcum who had lately come back from the West to avenge his brother's death.

“Why don't you go over to see your neighbor?” The girl's clear eyes gave no hint that

## THE PARDON OF BECKY DAY

she knew—as she well did—the trouble between the houses, and the widow stared in sheer amazement, for mountaineers do not talk with strangers of the quarrels between them.

“ I have nothin’ to do with such as her,” she said, sullenly; “ she ain’t the kind——”

“ Don’t! ” said the girl, with a flush, “ she’s dying.”

“ *Dyin’?* ”

“ Yes.” With the word the girl sprang from the mule and threw the reins over the pale of the fence in front of the log-hut across the way. In the doorway she turned as though she would speak to the woman on the steps again, but a tall man with a black beard appeared in the low door of the kitchen-shed.

“ How is your—how is Mrs. Day? ”

“ Mighty puny this mornin’—Becky is.”

The girl slipped into the dark room. On a disordered, pillowless bed lay a white face with eyes closed and mouth slightly open. Near the bed was a low wood fire. On the hearth were several thick cups filled with herbs and heavy fluids and covered with tarpaulin, for Becky’s “ man ” was a teamster. With a few touches of the girl’s quick hands, the covers of the bed were smooth, and the woman’s eyes rested on the girl’s own cloak. With her own handkerchief she brushed the death-damp from the forehead

## THE PARDON OF BECKY DAY

that already seemed growing cold. At her first touch, the woman's eyelids opened and dropped together again. Her lips moved, but no sound came from them.

In a moment the ashes disappeared, the hearth was clean and the fire was blazing. Every time the girl passed the window she saw the widow across the way staring hard at the hut. When she took the ashes into the street, the woman spoke to her.

"I can't go to see Becky—she hates me."

"With good reason."

The answer came with a clear sharpness that made the widow start and redden angrily; but the girl walked straight to the gate, her eyes ablaze with all the courage that the mountain woman knew and yet with another courage to which the primitive creature was a stranger—a courage that made the widow lower her own eyes and twist her hands under her apron.

"I want you to come and ask Becky to forgive you."

The woman stared and laughed.

"Forgive me? Becky forgive me? She wouldn't—an' I don't want her—" She could not look up into the girl's eyes; but she pulled a pipe from under the apron, laid it down with a trembling hand and began to rock slightly.

The girl leaned across the gate.



## THE PARDON OF BECKY DAY

“Look at me!” she said, sharply. The woman raised her eyes, swerved them once, and then in spite of herself, held them steady.

“Listen! Do you want a dying woman’s curse?”

It was a straight thrust to the core of a superstitious heart and a spasm of terror crossed the woman’s face. She began to wring her hands.

“Come on!” said the girl, sternly, and turned, without looking back, until she reached the door of the hut, where she beckoned and stood waiting, while the woman started slowly and helplessly from the steps, still wringing her hands. Inside, behind her, the wounded Marcum, who had been listening, raised himself on one elbow and looked after her through the window.

“She can’t come in—not while I’m in here.”

The girl turned quickly. It was Dave Day, the teamster, in the kitchen door, and his face looked blacker than his beard.

“Oh!” she said, simply, as though hurt, and then with a dignity that surprised her, the teamster turned and strode towards the back door.

“But I can git out, I reckon,” he said, and he never looked at the widow who had stopped, frightened, at the gate.

“Oh, I can’t—I *can’t!*” she said, and her voice broke; but the girl gently pushed her to



## THE PARDON OF BECKY DAY

the door, where she stopped again, leaning against the lintel. Across the way, the wounded Marcum, with a scowl of wonder, crawled out of his bed and started painfully to the door. The girl saw him and her heart beat fast.

Inside, Becky lay with closed eyes. She stirred uneasily, as though she felt some hated presence, but her eyes stayed fast, for the presence of Death in the room was stronger still.

"Becky!" At the broken cry, Becky's eyes flashed wide and fire broke through the haze that had gathered in them.

"I want ye ter fergive me, Becky."

The eyes burned steadily for a long time. For two days she had not spoken, but her voice came now, as though from the grave.

"You!" she said, and, again, with torturing scorn, "You!" And then she smiled, for she knew why her enemy was there, and her hour of triumph was come. The girl moved swiftly to the window—she could see the wounded Marcum slowly crossing the street, pistol in hand.

"What'd I ever do to you?"

"Nothin', Becky, nothin'."

Becky laughed harshly. "You can tell the truth—can't ye—to a dyin' woman?"

"Fergive me, Becky!"

A scowling face, tortured with pain, was thrust into the window.

## THE PARDON OF BECKY DAY

“ Sh-h! ” whispered the girl, imperiously, and the man lifted his heavy eyes, dropped one elbow on the window-sill and waited.

“ You tuk Jim from me! ”

The widow covered her face with her hands, and the Marcum at the window—brother to Jim, who was dead—lowered at her, listening keenly.

“ An’ you got him by lyin’ ’bout me. You tuk him by lyin’ ’bout me—didn’t ye? Didn’t ye? ” she repeated, fiercely, and her voice would have wrung the truth from a stone.

“ Yes—Becky—yes! ”

“ You hear? ” cried Becky, turning her eyes to the girl.

“ You made him believe an’ made ever’body, you could, believe that I was—was *bad*.” Her breath got short, but the terrible arraignment went on.

“ You started this war. My brother wouldn’t ’a’ shot Jim Marcum if it hadn’t been fer you. You killed Jim—your own husband—an’ you killed *me*. An’ now you want me to forgive you—you! ” She raised her right hand as though with it she would hurl the curse behind her lips, and the widow, with a cry, sprang for the bony fingers, catching them in her own hand and falling over on her knees at the bedside.

“ Don’t, Becky, don’t—don’t—*don’t!* ”

## THE PARDON OF BECKY DAY

There was a slight rustle at the back window. At the other, a pistol flashed into sight and dropped again below the sill. Turning, the girl saw Dave's bushy black head—he, too, with one elbow on the sill and the other hand out of sight.

“Shame!” she said, looking from one to the other of the two men, who had learned, at last, the bottom truth of the feud; and then she caught the sick woman's other hand and spoke quickly.

“Hush, Becky,” she said; and at the touch of her hand and the sound of her voice, Becky looked confusedly at her and let her upraised hand sink back to the bed. The widow stared swiftly from Jim's brother, at one window, to Dave Day at the other, and hid her face on her arms.

“Remember, Becky—how can you expect forgiveness in another world, unless you forgive in this?”

The woman's brow knitted and she lay quiet. Like the widow who held her hand, the dying woman believed, with never the shadow of a doubt, that somewhere above the stars, a living God reigned in a heaven of never-ending happiness; that somewhere beneath the earth a personal devil gloated over souls in eternal torture; that whether she went above, or below, hung

## THE PARDON OF BECKY DAY

solely on her last hour of contrition; and that in heaven or hell she would know those whom she might meet as surely as she had known them on earth. By and by her face softened and she drew a long breath.

“ Jim was a good man,” she said. And then after a moment:

“ An’ I was a good woman ”—she turned her eyes towards the girl—“ until Jim married *her*. I didn’t keer after that.” Then she got calm, and while she spoke to the widow, she looked at the girl.

“ Will you git up in church an’ say before ever’body that you knew I was *good* when you said I was bad—that you lied about me? ”

“ Yes—yes.” Still Becky looked at the girl, who stooped again.

“ She will, Becky, I know she will. Won’t you forgive her and leave peace behind you? Dave and Jim’s brother are here—make them shake hands. Won’t you—won’t you? ” she asked, turning from one to the other.

Both men were silent.

“ Won’t you? ” she repeated, looking at Jim’s brother.

“ I’ve got nothin’ agin Dave. I always thought that she ”—he did not call his brother’s wife by name—caused all this trouble. I’ve nothin’ agin Dave.”

## THE PARDON OF BECKY DAY

The girl turned. "Won't you, Dave?"

"I'm waitin' to hear whut Becky says."

Becky was listening, though her eyes were closed. Her brows knitted painfully. It was a hard compromise that she was asked to make between mortal hate and a love that was more than mortal, but the Plea that has stood between them for nearly twenty centuries prevailed, and the girl knew that the end of the feud was nigh.

Becky nodded.

"Yes, I fergive her, an' I want 'em to shake hands."

But not once did she turn her eyes to the woman whom she forgave, and the hand that the widow held gave back no answering pressure. The faces at the windows disappeared, and she motioned for the girl to take her weeping enemy away.

She did not open her eyes when the girl came back, but her lips moved and the girl bent above her.

"I know whar Jim is."

From somewhere outside came Dave's cough, and the dying woman turned her head as though she were reminded of something she had quite forgotten. Then, straightway, she forgot again.

The voice of the flood had deepened. A smile came to Becky's lips—a faint, terrible

## THE PARDON OF BECKY DAY

smile of triumph. The girl bent low and, with a startled face, shrank back.

*"An' I'll—git—thar—first."*

With that whisper went Becky's last breath, but the smile was there, even when her lips were cold.



## A CRISIS FOR THE GUARD

**T**HE tutor was from New England, and he was precisely what passes, with Southerners, as typical. He was thin, he wore spectacles, he talked dreamy abstractions, and he looked clerical. Indeed, his ancestors had been clergymen for generations, and, by nature and principle, he was an apostle of peace and a non-combatant. He had just come to the Gap—a cleft in the Cumberland Mountains—to prepare two young Blue Grass Kentuckians for Harvard. The railroad was still thirty miles away, and he had travelled mule-back through mudholes, on which, as the joke ran, a traveller was supposed to leave his card before he entered and disappeared—that his successor might not unknowingly press him too hard. I do know that, in those mudholes, mules were sometimes drowned. The tutor's gray mule fell over a bank with him, and he would have gone back had he not feared what was behind more than anything that was possible ahead. He was mud-bespattered, sore, tired and dispirited when he reached the Gap, but still plucky and full of business. He wanted

## A CRISIS FOR THE GUARD

to see his pupils at once and arrange his schedule. They came in after supper, and I had to laugh when I saw his mild eyes open. The boys were only fifteen and seventeen, but each had around him a huge revolver and a belt of cartridges, which he unbuckled and laid on the table after shaking hands. The tutor's shining glasses were raised to me for light. I gave it: my brothers had just come in from a little police duty, I explained. Everybody was a policeman at the Gap, I added; and, naturally, he still looked puzzled; but he began at once to question the boys about their studies, and, in an hour, he had his daily schedule mapped out and submitted to me. I had to cover my mouth with my hand when I came to one item—"Exercise: a walk of half an hour every Wednesday afternoon between five and six"—for the younger, known since at Harvard as the colonel, and known then at the Gap as the Infant of the Guard, winked most irreverently. As he had just come back from a ten-mile chase down the valley on horseback after a bad butcher, and as either was apt to have a like experience any and every day, I was not afraid they would fail to get exercise enough; so I let that item of the tutor pass.

The tutor slept in my room that night, and my four brothers, the eldest of whom was a lieutenant on the police guard, in a room across the

## A CRISIS FOR THE GUARD

hallway. I explained to the tutor that there was much lawlessness in the region; that we "foreigners" were trying to build a town, and that, to ensure law and order, we had all become volunteer policemen. He seemed to think it was most interesting.

About three o'clock in the morning a shrill whistle blew, and, from habit, I sprang out of bed. I had hardly struck the floor when four pairs of heavy boots thundered down the stairs just outside the door, and I heard a gasp from the startled tutor. He was bolt upright in bed, and his face in the moonlight was white with fear.

"Wha—wha—what's that?"

I told him it was a police whistle and that the boys were answering it. Everybody jumped when he heard a whistle, I explained; for nobody in town was permitted to blow one except a policeman. I guessed there would be enough men answering that whistle without me, however, and I slipped back into bed.

"Well," he said; and when the boys lumbered upstairs again and one shouted through the door, "All right!" the tutor said again with emphasis: "Well!"

Next day there was to be a political gathering at the Gap. A Senator was trying to lift himself by his own boot-straps into the Governor's

## A CRISIS FOR THE GUARD

chair. He was going to make a speech, there would be a big and unruly crowd, and it would be a crucial day for the Guard. 'So, next morning, I suggested to the tutor that it would be unwise for him to begin work with his pupils that day, for the reason that he was likely to be greatly interrupted and often. He thought, however, he would like to begin. He did begin, and within half an hour Gordon, the town sergeant, thrust his head inside the door and called the colonel by name.

"Come on," he said; "they're going to try that d—n butcher." And seeing from the tutor's face that he had done something dreadful, he slammed the door in apologetic confusion. The tutor was law-abiding, and it was the law that called the colonel, and so the tutor let him go—nay, went with him and heard the case. The butcher had gone off on another man's horse—the man owed him money, he said, and the only way he could get his money was to take the horse as security. But the sergeant did not know this, and he and the colonel rode after him, and the colonel, having the swifter horse, but not having had time to get his own pistol, took the sergeant's and went ahead. He fired quite close to the running butcher twice, and the butcher thought it wise to halt. When he saw the child who had captured him he was speechless, and he

## A CRISIS FOR THE GUARD

got off his horse and cut a big switch to give the colonel a whipping, but the doughty Infant drew down on him again and made him ride, foaming with rage, back to town. The butcher was good-natured at the trial, however, and the tutor heard him say, with a great guffaw:

"An' I *do* believe the d—n little fool would 'a' shot me."

Once more the tutor looked at the pupil whom he was to lead into the classic halls of Harvard, and once more he said:

"Well!"

People were streaming into town now, and I persuaded the tutor that there was no use for him to begin his studies again. He said he would go fishing down the river and take a swim. He would get back in time to hear the speaking in the afternoon. So I got him a horse, and he came out with a long cane fishing-pole and a pair of saddle-bags. I told him that he must watch the old nag or she would run away with him, particularly when he started homeward. The tutor was not much of a centaur. The horse started as he was throwing the wrong leg over his saddle, and the tutor clamped his rod under one arm, clutching for the reins with both hands and kicking for his stirrups with both feet. The tip of the limber pole beat the horse's flank gently as she struck a trot, and smartly as she struck



## A CRISIS FOR THE GUARD

into a lope, and so with arms, feet, saddle-pockets, and fishing-rod flapping towards different points of the compass, the tutor passed out of sight over Poplar Hill on a dead run.

As soon as he could get over a fit of laughter and catch his breath, the colonel asked:

“Do you know what he had in those saddle-pockets?”

“No.”

“A bathing suit,” he shouted; and he went off again.

Not even in a primeval forest, it seemed, would the modest Puritan bare his body to the mirror of limpid water and the caress of mountain air.

\* \* \* \* \*

The trouble had begun early that morning, when Gordon, the town sergeant, stepped from his door and started down the street with no little self-satisfaction. He had been arraying himself for a full hour, and after a tub-bath and a shave he stepped, spick and span, into the street with his head steadily held high, except when he bent it to look at the shine of his boots, which was the work of his own hands, and of which he was proud. As a matter of fact, the sergeant felt that he looked just as he particularly wanted to look on that day—his best. Gordon



## A CRISIS FOR THE GUARD

was a native of Wise, but that day a girl was coming from Lee, and he was ready for her.

Opposite the Intermont, a pistol-shot cracked from Cherokee Avenue, and from habit he started that way. Logan, the captain of the Guard—the leading lawyer in that part of the State—was ahead of him however, and he called to Gordon to follow. Gordon ran in the grass along the road to keep those boots out of the dust. Somebody had fired off his pistol for fun and was making tracks for the river. As they pushed the miscreant close, he dashed into the river to wade across. It was a very cold morning, and Gordon prayed that the captain was not going to be such a fool as to follow the fellow across the river. He should have known better.

“In with you,” said the captain quietly, and the mirror of the shining boots was dimmed, and the icy water chilled the sergeant to the knees and made him so mad that he flashed his pistol and told the runaway to halt, which he did in the middle of the stream. It was Richards, the tough from “the Pocket,” and, as he paid his fine promptly, they had to let him go. Gordon went back, put on his everyday clothes and got his billy and his whistle and prepared to see the maid from Lee when his duty should let him. As a matter of fact, he saw her but once, and then he was not made happy.

## A CRISIS FOR THE GUARD

The people had come in rapidly—giants from the Crab Orchard, mountaineers from through the Gap, and from Cracker's Neck and Thunderstruck Knob; Valley people from Little Stone Gap, from the furnace site and Bum Hollow and Wildcat, and people from Lee, from Turkey Cove, and from the Pocket—the much-dreaded Pocket—far down in the river hills.

They came on foot and on horseback, and left their horses in the bushes and crowded the streets and filled the saloon of one Jack Woods—who had the cackling laugh of Satan and did not like the Guard, for good reasons, and whose particular pleasure was to persuade some customer to stir up a hornet's nest of trouble. From the saloon the crowd moved up towards the big spring at the foot of Imboden Hill, where, under beautiful trunk-mottled beeches, was built the speakers' platform.

Precisely at three o'clock the local orator, much flurried, rose, ran his hand through his long hair and looked in silence over the crowd.

“Fellow citizens! There's beauty in the stars of night and in the glowin' orb of day. There's beauty in the rollin' meadow and in the quiet stream. There's beauty in the smilin' valley and in the everlastin' hills. Therefore, fellow citizens—THEREFORE, fellow citizens, allow me to introduce to you the future Governor of these

## A CRISIS FOR THE GUARD

United States — Senator William Bayhone.” And he sat down with such a beatific smile of self-satisfaction that a fiend would not have had the heart to say he had not won.

Now, there are wandering minstrels yet in the Cumberland Hills. They play fiddles and go about making up “ballets” that involve local history. Sometimes they make a pretty good verse—this, for instance, about a feud:

The death of these two men  
Caused great trouble in our land.  
Caused men to leave their families  
And take the parting hand.  
Retaliation, still at war,  
May never, never cease.  
I would that I could only see  
Our land once more at peace.

There was a minstrel out in the crowd, and pretty soon he struck up his fiddle and his lay, and he did not exactly sing the virtues of Billy Bayhone. Evidently some partisan thought he ought, for he smote him on the thigh with the toe of his boot and raised such a stir as a rude stranger might had he smitten a troubadour in Arthur's Court. The crowd thickened and surged, and four of the Guard emerged with the fiddler and his assailant under arrest. It was as though the Valley were a sheet of water straight-

## A CRISIS FOR THE GUARD

way and the fiddler the dropping of a stone, for the ripple of mischief started in every direction. It caught two mountaineers on the edge of the crowd, who for no particular reason thumped each other with their huge fists, and were swiftly led away by that silent Guard. The operation of a mysterious force was in the air and it puzzled the crowd. Somewhere a whistle would blow, and, from this point and that, a quiet, well-dressed young man would start swiftly toward it. The crowd got restless and uneasy, and, by and by, experimental and defiant. For in that crowd was the spirit of Bunker Hill and King's Mountain. It couldn't fiddle and sing; it couldn't settle its little troubles after the good old fashion of fist and skull; it couldn't charge up and down the streets on horseback if it pleased; it couldn't ride over those puncheon sidewalks; it couldn't drink openly and without shame; and, Shades of the American Eagle and the Stars and Stripes, it couldn't even yell. No wonder, like the heathen, it raged. What did these blanked "furriners" have against them anyhow? They couldn't run *their* country—not much.

Pretty soon there came a shrill whistle far down-town — then another and another. It sounded ominous, indeed, and it was, being a signal of distress from the Infant of the Guard, who stood before the door of Jack Woods's

## A CRISIS FOR THE GUARD

saloon with his pistol levelled on Richards, the tough from the Pocket, the Infant, standing there with blazing eyes, alone and in the heart of a gathering storm.

Now the chain of lawlessness that had tightened was curious and significant. There was the tough and his kind—lawless, irresponsible and possible in any community. There was the farm-hand who had come to town with the wild son of his employer—an honest, law-abiding farmer. Came, too, a friend of the farmer who had not yet reaped the crop of wild oats sown in his youth. Whiskey ran all into one mould. The farm-hand drank with the tough, the wild son with the farm-hand, and the three drank together, and got the farmer's unregenerate friend to drink with them; and he and the law-abiding farmer himself, by and by, took a drink for old time's sake. Now the cardinal command of rural and municipal districts all through the South is, "Forsake not your friend": and it does not take whiskey long to make friends. Jack Woods had given the tough from the Pocket a whistle.

"You dassen't blow it," said he.

Richards asked why, and Jack told him. Straightway the tough blew the whistle, and when the little colonel ran down to arrest him he laughed and resisted, and the wild son and the farm-hand and Jack Woods showed an



## A CRISIS FOR THE GUARD

inclination to take his part. So, holding his "drop" on the tough with one hand, the Infant blew vigorously for help with the other.

Logan, the captain, arrived first—he usually arrived first—and Gordon, the sergeant, was by his side—Gordon was always by his side. He would have stormed a battery if the captain had led him, and the captain would have led him—alone—if he thought it was his duty. Logan was as calm as a stage hero at the crisis of a play. The crowd had pressed close.

"Take that man," he said sharply, pointing to the tough whom the colonel held covered, and two men seized him from behind.

The farm-hand drew his gun.

"No, you don't!" he shouted.

"Take *him*," said the captain quietly; and he was seized by two more and disarmed.

It was then that Sturgeon, the wild son, ran up.

"You can't take that man to jail," he shouted with an oath, pointing at the farm-hand.

The captain waved his hand. "And *him*!"

As two of the Guard approached, Sturgeon started for his gun. Now, Sturgeon was Gordon's blood cousin, but Gordon levelled his own pistol. Sturgeon's weapon caught in his pocket, and he tried to pull it loose. The moment he succeeded Gordon stood ready to fire. Twice



## A CRISIS FOR THE GUARD

the hammer of the sergeant's pistol went back almost to the turning-point, and then, as he pulled the trigger again, Macfarlan, first lieutenant, who once played lacrosse at Yale, rushed, parting the crowd right and left, and dropped his billy lightly three times—right, left and right—on Sturgeon's head. The blood spurted, the head fell back between the bully's shoulders, his grasp on his pistol loosened, and he sank to his knees. For a moment the crowd was stunned by the lightning quickness of it all. It was the first blow ever struck in that country with a piece of wood in the name of the law.

"Take 'em on, boys," called the captain, whose face had paled a little, though he seemed as cool as ever.

And the boys started, dragging the three struggling prisoners, and the crowd, growing angrier and angrier, pressed close behind, a hundred of them, led by the farmer himself, a giant in size, and beside himself with rage and humiliation. Once he broke through the guard line and was pushed back. Knives and pistols began to flash now everywhere, and loud threats and curses rose on all sides—the men should not be taken to jail. The sergeant, dragging Sturgeon, looked up into the blazing eyes of a girl on the sidewalk, Sturgeon's sister—the maid from Lee. The sergeant groaned. Logan gave

## A CRISIS FOR THE GUARD

some order just then to the Infant, who ran ahead, and by the time the Guard with the prisoners had backed to a corner there were two lines of Guards drawn across the street. The first line let the prisoners and their captors through, closed up behind, and backed slowly towards the corner, where it meant to stand.

It was very exciting there. Winchesters and shotguns protruded from the line threateningly, but the mob came on as though it were going to press through, and determined faces blenched with excitement, but not with fear. A moment later, the little colonel and the Guards on either side of him were jabbing at men with cocked Winchesters. At that moment it would have needed but one shot to ring out to have started an awful carnage; but not yet was there a man in the mob—and that is the trouble with mobs—who seemed willing to make a sacrifice of himself that the others might gain their end. For one moment they halted, cursing and waving their pistols, preparing for a charge; and in that crucial moment the tutor from New England came like a thunderbolt to the rescue. Shrieks of terror from children, shrieks of outraged modesty from women, rent the air down the street where the huddled crowd was rushing right and left in wild confusion, and, through the parting crowd, the tutor flew into sight on

## A CRISIS FOR THE GUARD

horseback, bareheaded, barefooted, clad in a gaudily striped bathing suit, with his saddle-pockets flapping behind him like wings. Some mischievous mountaineers, seeing him in his bathing suit on the point of a rock up the river, had joyously taken a pot-shot or two at him, and the tutor had mounted his horse and fled. But he came as welcome and as effective as an emissary straight from the God of Battles, though he came against his will, for his old nag was frantic and was running away. Men, women and children parted before him, and gaping mouths widened as he passed. The impulse of the crowd ran faster than his horse, and even the enraged mountaineers in amazed wonder sprang out of his way, and, far in the rear, a few privileged ones saw the frantic horse plunge towards his stable, stop suddenly, and pitch his mottled rider through the door and mercifully out of sight. Human purpose must give way when a pure miracle comes to earth to baffle it. It gave way now long enough to let the oaken doors of the calaboose close behind tough, farm-hand, and the farmer's wild son. The line of Winchesters at the corner quietly gave way. The power of the Guard was established, the backbone of the opposition broken; henceforth, the work for law and order was to be easy compared with what it had been. Up at the big

## A CRISIS FOR THE GUARD

spring under the beeches sat the disgusted orator of the day and the disgusted Senator, who, seriously, was quite sure that the Guard, being composed of Democrats, had taken this way to shatter his campaign.

\* \* \* \* \*

Next morning, in court, the members of the Guard acted as witnesses against the culprits. Macfarlan stated that he had struck Sturgeon over the head to save his life, and Sturgeon, after he had paid his fine, said he would prefer being shot to being clubbed to death, and he bore dangerous malice for a long time, until he learned what everybody else knew, that Macfarlan always did what he thought he ought, and never spoke anything but the literal truth, whether it hurt friend, foe or himself.

After court, Richards, the tough, met Gordon, the sergeant, in the road. "Gordon," he said, "you swore to a —— lie about me a while ago."

"How do you want to fight?" asked Gordon.

"Fair!"

"Come on"; and Gordon started for the town limits across the river, Richards following on horseback. At a store, Gordon unbuckled his belt and tossed his pistol and his police badge inside. Jack Woods, seeing this, followed, and the Infant, seeing Woods, followed too. The law was law, but this affair was personal,

## A CRISIS FOR THE GUARD

and would be settled without the limits of law and local obligation. Richards tried to talk to Gordon, but the sergeant walked with his head down, as though he could not hear—he was too enraged to talk.

While Richards was hitching his horse in the bushes the sergeant stood on the bank of the river with his arms folded and his chin swinging from side to side. When he saw Richards in the open he rushed for him like a young bull that feels the first swelling of his horns. It was not a fair, stand-up, knock-down English fight, but a Scotch tussle, in which either could strike, kick, bite or gouge. After a few blows they clinched and whirled and fell, Gordon on top—with which advantage he began to pound the tough from the Pocket savagely. Woods made as if to pull him off, but the Infant drew his pistol. “Keep off!”

“He’s killing him!” shouted Woods, halting.

“Let him holler ‘Enough,’ then,” said the Infant.

“He’s killing him!” shouted Woods.

“Let Gordon’s friends take him off, then,” said the Infant. “Don’t *you* touch him.”

And it was done. Richards was senseless and speechless—he really couldn’t shout “Enough.” But he was content, and the day left a very satisfactory impression on him and on his friends.



## A CRISIS FOR THE GUARD

If they misbehaved in town they would be arrested: that was plain. But it was also plain that if anybody had a personal grievance against one of the Guard he could call him out of the town limits and get satisfaction, after the way of his fathers. There was nothing personal at all in the attitude of the Guard towards the outsiders; which recognition was a great stride toward mutual understanding and final high regard.

All that day I saw that something was troubling the tutor from New England. It was the Moral Sense of the Puritan at work, I supposed, and, that night, when I came in with a new supply of "billies" and gave one to each of my brothers, the tutor looked up over his glasses and cleared his throat.

"Now," said I to myself, "we shall catch it hot on the savagery of the South and the barbarous Method of keeping it down"; but before he had said three words the colonel looked as though he were going to get up and slap the little dignitary on the back—which would have created a sensation indeed.

"Have you an extra one of those—those \_\_\_\_\_"

"Billies?" I said, wonderingly.

"Yes. I—I believe I shall join the Guard myself," said the tutor from New England.



## CHRISTMAS NIGHT WITH SATAN

NO night was this in Hades with solemn-eyed Dante, for Satan was only a woolly little black dog, and surely no dog was ever more absurdly misnamed. When Uncle Carey first heard that name, he asked gravely:

“Why, Dinnie, where in h——,” Uncle Carey gulped slightly, “did you get him?” And Dinnie laughed merrily, for she saw the fun of the question, and shook her black curls.

“He didn’t come f’um *that place*.”

Distinctly Satan had not come from that place. On the contrary, he might by a miracle have dropped straight from some Happy Hunting-ground, for all the signs he gave of having touched pitch in this or another sphere. Nothing human was ever born that was gentler, merrier, more trusting or more lovable than Satan. That was why Uncle Carey said again gravely that he could hardly tell Satan and his little mistress apart. He rarely saw them apart, and as both had black tangled hair and bright black eyes; as one awoke every morning with a happy smile and the other with a jolly bark; as they

## CHRISTMAS NIGHT WITH SATAN

played all day like wind-shaken shadows and each won every heart at first sight—the likeness was really rather curious. I have always believed that Satan made the spirit of Dinnie's house, orthodox and severe though it was, almost kindly toward his great namesake. I know I have never been able, since I knew little Satan, to think old Satan as bad as I once painted him, though I am sure the little dog had many pretty tricks that the "old boy" doubtless has never used in order to amuse his friends.

"Shut the door, Saty, please." Dinnie would say, precisely as she would say it to Uncle Billy, the butler, and straightway Satan would launch himself at it—bang! He never would learn to close it softly, for Satan liked that—bang!

If you kept tossing a coin or marble in the air, Satan would keep catching it and putting it back in your hand for another throw, till you got tired. Then he would drop it on a piece of rag carpet, snatch the carpet with his teeth, throw the coin across the room and rush for it like mad, until he got tired. If you put a penny on his nose, he would wait until you counted, one—two—*three!* Then he would toss it up himself and catch it. Thus, perhaps, Satan grew to love Mammon right well, but for another and better reason than that he liked simply to throw it around—as shall now be made plain.

## CHRISTMAS NIGHT WITH SATAN

A rubber ball with a hole in it was his favorite plaything, and he would take it in his mouth and rush around the house like a child, squeezing it to make it whistle. When he got a new ball, he would hide his old one away until the new one was the worse worn of the two, and then he would bring out the old one again. If Dinnie gave him a nickel or a dime, when they went down-town, Satan would rush into a store, rear up on the counter where the rubber balls were kept, drop the coin, and get a ball for himself. Thus, Satan learned finance. He began to hoard his pennies, and one day Uncle Carey found a pile of seventeen under a corner of the carpet. Usually he carried to Dinnie all coins that he found in the street, but he showed one day that he was going into the ball-business for himself. Uncle Carey had given Dinnie a nickel for some candy, and, as usual, Satan trotted down the street behind her. As usual, Satan stopped before the knick-knack shop.

"Tum on, Saty," said Dinnie. Satan reared against the door as he always did, and Dinnie said again:

"Tum on, Saty." As usual, Satan dropped to his haunches, but what was unusual, he failed to bark. Now Dinnie had got a new ball for Satan only that morning, so Dinnie stamped her foot.



Satan would drop the coin and get a ball for himself.





## CHRISTMAS NIGHT WITH SATAN

"I tell you to tum on, Saty." Satan never moved. He looked at Dinnie as much as to say:

"I have never disobeyed you before, little mistress, but this time I have an excellent reason for what must seem to you very bad manners—" and being a gentleman withal, Satan rose on his haunches and begged.

"You're des a pig, Saty," said Dinnie, but with a sigh for the candy that was not to be, Dinnie opened the door, and Satan, to her wonder, rushed to the counter, put his forepaws on it, and dropped from his mouth a dime. Satan had found that coin on the street. He didn't bark for change, nor beg for two balls, but he had got it in his woolly little head, somehow, that in that store a coin meant a ball, though never before nor afterward did he try to get a ball for a penny.

Satan slept in Uncle Carey's room, for of all people, after Dinnie, Satan loved Uncle Carey best. Every day at noon he would go to an upstairs window and watch the cars come around the corner, until a very tall, square-shouldered young man swung to the ground, and down Satan would scamper—yelping—to meet him at the gate. If Uncle Carey, after supper and when Dinnie was in bed, started out of the house, still in his business clothes, Satan would leap out



## CHRISTMAS NIGHT WITH SATAN

before him, knowing that he too might be allowed to go; but if Uncle Carey had put on black clothes that showed a big, dazzling shirt-front, and picked up his high hat, Satan would sit perfectly still and look disconsolate; for as there were no parties or theatres for Dinnie, so there were none for him. But no matter how late it was when Uncle Carey came home, he always saw Satan's little black nose against the window-pane and heard his bark of welcome.

After intelligence, Satan's chief trait was loveliness—nobody ever knew him to fight, to snap at anything, or to get angry; after loveliness, it was politeness. If he wanted something to eat, if he wanted Dinnie to go to bed, if he wanted to get out of the door, he would beg—beg prettily on his haunches, his little red tongue out and his funny little paws hanging loosely. Indeed, it was just because Satan was so little less than human, I suppose, that old Satan began to be afraid he might have a soul. So the wicked old namesake with the Hoofs and Horns laid a trap for little Satan, and, as he is apt to do, he began laying it early—long, indeed, before Christmas.

When Dinnie started to kindergarten that autumn, Satan found that there was one place where he could never go. Like the lamb, he could not go to school; so while Dinnie was

## CHRISTMAS NIGHT WITH SATAN

away, Satan began to make friends. He would bark, "Howdy-do?" to every dog that passed his gate. Many stopped to rub noses with him through the fence—even Hugo the mastiff, and nearly all, indeed, except one strange-looking dog that appeared every morning at precisely nine o'clock and took his stand on the corner. There he would lie patiently until a funeral came along, and then Satan would see him take his place at the head of the procession; and thus he would march out to the cemetery and back again. Nobody knew where he came from nor where he went, and Uncle Carey called him the "funeral dog" and said he was doubtless looking for his dead master. Satan even made friends with a scrawny little yellow dog that followed an old drunkard around—a dog that, when his master fell in the gutter, would go and catch a policeman by the coat-tail, lead the officer to his helpless master, and spend the night with him in jail.

By and by Satan began to slip out of the house at night, and Uncle Billy said he reckoned Satan had "jined de club"; and late one night, when he had not come in, Uncle Billy told Uncle Carey that it was "powerful slippery and he reckoned they'd better send de kerridge after him"—an innocent remark that made Uncle Carey send a boot after the old butler, who fled

## CHRISTMAS NIGHT WITH SATAN

chuckling down the stairs, and left Uncle Carey chuckling in his room.

Satan had "jined de club"—the big club—and no dog was too lowly in Satan's eyes for admission; for no priest ever preached the brotherhood of man better than Satan lived it—both with man and dog. And thus he lived it that Christmas night—to his sorrow.

Christmas Eve had been gloomy—the gloomiest of Satan's life. Uncle Carey had gone to a neighboring town at noon. Satan had followed him down to the station, and when the train started, Uncle Carey had ordered him to go home. Satan took his time about going home, not knowing it was Christmas Eve. He found strange things happening to dogs that day. The truth was, that policemen were shooting all dogs found that were without a collar and a license, and every now and then a bang and a howl somewhere would stop Satan in his tracks. At a little yellow house on the edge of town he saw half a dozen strange dogs in a kennel, and every now and then a negro would lead a new one up to the house and deliver him to a big man at the door, who, in return, would drop something into the negro's hand. While Satan waited, the old drunkard came along with his little dog at his heels, paused before the door, looked a moment at his faithful

## CHRISTMAS NIGHT WITH SATAN

follower, and went slowly on. Satan little knew the old drunkard's temptation, for in that yellow house kind-hearted people had offered fifteen cents for each dog brought to them, without a license, that they might mercifully put it to death, and fifteen cents was the precise price for a drink of good whiskey. Just then there was another bang and another howl somewhere, and Satan trotted home to meet a calamity. Dinnie was gone. Her mother had taken her out in the country to Grandmother Dean's to spend Christmas, as was the family custom, and Mrs. Dean would not wait any longer for Satan; so she told Uncle Billy to bring him out after supper.

"Ain't you 'shamed o' yo'self—suh—?" said the old butler, "keepin' me from ketchin' Christmas gifts dis day?"

Uncle Billy was indignant, for the negroes begin at four o'clock in the afternoon of Christmas Eve to slip around corners and jump from hiding places to shout "Christmas Gif'—Christmas Gif'"; and the one who shouts first gets a gift. No wonder it was gloomy for Satan—Uncle Carey, Dinnie, and all gone, and not a soul but Uncle Billy in the big house. Every few minutes he would trot on his little black legs upstairs and downstairs, looking for his mistress. As dusk came on, he would every now and then

## CHRISTMAS NIGHT WITH SATAN

howl plaintively. After begging his supper, and while Uncle Billy was hitching up a horse in the stable, Satan went out in the yard and lay with his nose between the close panels of the fence—quite heart-broken. When he saw his old friend, Hugo, the mastiff, trotting into the gaslight, he began to bark his delight frantically. The big mastiff stopped and nosed his sympathy through the fence for a moment and walked slowly on, Satan frisking and barking along inside. At the gate Hugo stopped, and raising one huge paw, playfully struck it. The gate flew open, and with a happy yelp Satan leaped into the street. The noble mastiff hesitated as though this were not quite regular. He did not belong to the club, and he didn't know that Satan had ever been away from home after dark in his life. For a moment he seemed to wait for Dinnie to call him back as she always did, but this time there was no sound, and Hugo walked majestically on, with absurd little Satan running in a circle about him. On the way they met the "funeral dog," who glanced inquiringly at Satan, shied from the mastiff, and trotted on. On the next block the old drunkard's yellow cur ran across the street, and after interchanging the compliments of the season, ran back after his staggering master. As they approached the railroad track a strange dog joined them, to whom Hugo paid



## CHRISTMAS NIGHT WITH SATAN

no attention. At the crossing another new acquaintance bounded toward them. This one—a half-breed shepherd—was quite friendly, and he received Satan's advances with affable condescension. Then another came and another, and little Satan's head got quite confused. They were a queer-looking lot of curs and half-breeds from the negro settlement at the edge of the woods, and though Satan had little experience, his instincts told him that all was not as it should be, and had he been human he would have wondered very much how they had escaped the carnage that day. Uneasy, he looked around for Hugo; but Hugo had disappeared. Once or twice Hugo had looked around for Satan, and Satan paying no attention, the mastiff trotted on home in disgust. Just then a powerful yellow cur sprang out of the darkness over the railroad track, and Satan sprang to meet him, and so nearly had the life scared out of him by the snarl and flashing fangs of the new-comer that he hardly had the strength to shrink back behind his new friend, the half-breed shepherd.

A strange thing then happened. The other dogs became suddenly quiet, and every eye was on the yellow cur. He sniffed the air once or twice, gave two or three peculiar low growls, and all those dogs except Satan lost the civilization of centuries and went back suddenly to the time



## CHRISTMAS NIGHT WITH SATAN

when they were wolves and were looking for a leader. The cur was Lobo for that little pack, and after a short parley, he lifted his nose high and started away without looking back, while the other dogs silently trotted after him. With a mystified yelp, Satan ran after them. The cur did not take the turnpike, but jumped the fence into a field, making his way by the rear of houses, from which now and then another dog would slink out and silently join the band. Every one of them Satan nosed most friendlily, and to his great joy the funeral dog, on the edge of the town, leaped into their midst. Ten minutes later the cur stopped in the midst of some woods, as though he would inspect his followers. Plainly, he disapproved of Satan, and Satan kept out of his way. Then he sprang into the turnpike and the band trotted down it, under flying black clouds and shifting bands of brilliant moonlight. Once, a buggy swept past them. A familiar odor struck Satan's nose, and he stopped for a moment to smell the horse's tracks; and right he was, too, for out at her grandmother's Dinnie refused to be comforted, and in that buggy was Uncle Billy going back to town after him.

Snow was falling. It was a great lark for Satan. Once or twice, as he trotted along, he had to bark his joy aloud, and each time the big cur gave him such a fierce growl that he feared

## CHRISTMAS NIGHT WITH SATAN

thereafter to open his jaws. But he was happy for all that, to be running out into the night with such a lot of funny friends and not to know or care where he was going. He got pretty tired presently, for over hill and down hill they went, at that unceasing trot, trot, trot! Satan's tongue began to hang out. Once he stopped to rest, but the loneliness frightened him and he ran on after them with his heart almost bursting. He was about to lie right down and die, when the cur stopped, sniffed the air once or twice, and with those same low growls, led the marauders through a rail fence into the woods, and lay quietly down. How Satan loved that soft, thick grass, all snowy that it was! It was almost as good as his own bed at home. And there they lay—how long, Satan never knew, for he went to sleep and dreamed that he was after a rat in the barn at home; and he yelped in his sleep, which made the cur lift his big yellow head and show his fangs. The moving of the half-breed shepherd and the funeral dog waked him at last, and Satan got up. Half crouching, the cur was leading the way toward the dark, still woods on top of the hill, over which the Star of Bethlehem was lowly sinking, and under which lay a flock of the gentle creatures that seemed to have been almost sacred to the Lord of that Star. They were in sore need of a watchful shepherd

## CHRISTMAS NIGHT WITH SATAN

now. Satan was stiff and chilled, but he was rested and had had his sleep, and he was just as ready for fun as he always was. He didn't understand that sneaking. Why they didn't all jump and race and bark as he wanted to, he couldn't see; but he was too polite to do otherwise than as they did, and so he sneaked after them; and one would have thought he knew, as well as the rest, the hellish mission on which they were bent.

Out of the woods they went, across a little branch, and there the big cur lay flat again in the grass. A faint bleat came from the hill-side beyond, where Satan could see another woods—and then another bleat, and another. And the cur began to creep again, like a snake in the grass; and the others crept too, and little Satan crept, though it was all a sad mystery to him. Again the cur lay still, but only long enough for Satan to see curious, fat, white shapes above him—and then, with a blood-curdling growl, the big brute dashed forward. Oh, there was fun in them after all! Satan barked joyfully. Those were some new playmates—those fat, white, hairy things up there; and Satan was amazed when, with frightened snorts, they fled in every direction. But this was a new game, perhaps, of which he knew nothing, and as did the rest, so did Satan. He picked out one of the white

## CHRISTMAS NIGHT WITH SATAN

things and fled barking after it. It was a little fellow that he was after, but little as he was, Satan might never have caught up, had not the sheep got tangled in some brush. Satan danced about him in mad glee, giving him a playful nip at his wool and springing back to give him another nip, and then away again. Plainly, he was not going to bite back, and when the sheep struggled itself tired and sank down in a heap, Satan came close and licked him, and as he was very warm and woolly, he lay down and snuggled up against him for awhile, listening to the turmoil that was going on around him. And as he listened, he got frightened.

If this was a new game it was certainly a very peculiar one—the wild rush, the bleats of terror, gasps of agony, and the fiendish growls of attack and the sounds of ravenous gluttony. With every hair bristling, Satan rose and sprang from the woods—and stopped with a fierce tingling of the nerves that brought him horror and fascination. One of the white shapes lay still before him. There was a great steaming red splotch on the snow, and a strange odor in the air that made him dizzy; but only for a moment. Another white shape rushed by. A tawny streak followed, and then, in a patch of moonlight, Satan saw the yellow cur with his teeth fastened in the throat of his moaning playmate.

## CHRISTMAS NIGHT WITH SATAN

Like lightning Satan sprang at the cur, who tossed him ten feet away and went back to his awful work. Again Satan leaped, but just then a shout rose behind him, and the cur leaped too as though a bolt of lightning had crashed over him, and, no longer noticing Satan or sheep, began to quiver with fright and slink away. Another shout rose from another direction—another from another.

“ Drive 'em into the barn-yard! ” was the cry.

Now and then there was a fearful bang and a howl of death-agony, as some dog tried to break through the encircling men, who yelled and cursed as they closed in on the trembling brutes that slunk together and crept on; for it is said, every sheep-killing dog knows his fate if caught, and will make little effort to escape. With them went Satan, through the barn-yard gate, where they huddled in a corner—a shamed and terrified group. A tall overseer stood at the gate.

“ Ten of 'em! ” he said grimly.

He had been on the lookout for just such a tragedy, for there had recently been a sheep-killing raid on several farms in that neighborhood, and for several nights he had had a lantern hung out on the edge of the woods to scare the dogs away; but a drunken farm-hand had neglected his duty that Christmas Eve.



## CHRISTMAS NIGHT WITH SATAN

“Yassuh, an’ dey’s jus’ sebenteen dead sheep out dar,” said a negro.

“Look at the little one,” said a tall boy who looked like the overseer; and Satan knew that he spoke of him.

“Go back to the house, son,” said the overseer, “and tell your mother to give you a Christmas present I got for you yesterday.” With a glad whoop the boy dashed away, and in a moment dashed back with a brand-new .32 Winchester in his hand.

The dark hour before dawn was just breaking on Christmas Day. It was the hour when Satan usually rushed upstairs to see if his little mistress was asleep. If he were only at home now, and if he only had known how his little mistress was weeping for him amid her playthings and his—two new balls and a brass-studded collar with a silver plate on which was his name, Satan Dean; and if Dinnie could have seen him now, her heart would have broken; for the tall boy raised his gun. There was a jet of smoke, a sharp, clean crack, and the funeral dog started on the right way at last toward his dead master. Another crack, and the yellow cur leaped from the ground and fell kicking. Another crack and another, and with each crack a dog tumbled, until little Satan sat on his haunches amid the writhing pack, alone. His



## CHRISTMAS NIGHT WITH SATAN

time was now come. As the rifle was raised, he heard up at the big house the cries of children; the popping of fire-crackers; tooting of horns and whistles and loud shouts of "Christmas Gif', Christmas Gif'!" His little heart beat furiously. Perhaps he knew just what he was doing; perhaps it was the accident of habit; most likely Satan simply wanted to go home—but when that gun rose, Satan rose too, on his haunches, his tongue out, his black eyes steady and his funny little paws hanging loosely—and begged! The boy lowered the gun.

"Down, sir!" Satan dropped obediently, but when the gun was lifted again, Satan rose again, and again he begged.

"Down, I tell you!" This time Satan would not down, but sat begging for his life. The boy turned.

"Papa, I can't shoot that dog." Perhaps Satan had reached the stern old overseer's heart. Perhaps he remembered suddenly that it was Christmas. At any rate, he said gruffly:

"Well, let him go."

"Come here, sir!" Satan bounded toward the tall boy, frisking and trustful and begged again.

"Go home, sir!"

Satan needed no second command. Without a sound he fled out the barn-yard, and, as he

## CHRISTMAS NIGHT WITH SATAN

swept under the front gate, a little girl ran out of the front door of the big house and dashed down the steps, shrieking:

“Saty! Saty! Oh, Saty!” But Satan never heard. On he fled, across the crisp fields, leaped the fence and struck the road, lickety-split! for home, while Dinnie dropped sobbing in the snow.

“Hitch up a horse, quick,” said Uncle Carey, rushing after Dinnie and taking her up in his arms. Ten minutes later, Uncle Carey and Dinnie, both warmly bundled up, were after flying Satan. They never caught him until they reached the hill on the outskirts of town, where was the kennel of the kind-hearted people who were giving painless death to Satan’s four-footed kind, and where they saw him stop and turn from the road. There was divine providence in Satan’s flight for one little dog that Christmas morning; for Uncle Carey saw the old drunkard staggering down the road without his little companion, and a moment later, both he and Dinnie saw Satan nosing a little yellow cur between the palings. Uncle Carey knew the little cur, and while Dinnie was shrieking for Satan, he was saying under his breath:

“Well, I swear!—I swear!—I swear!” And while the big man who came to the door

## CHRISTMAS NIGHT WITH SATAN

was putting Satan into Dinnie's arms, he said, sharply:

"Who brought that yellow dog here?" The man pointed to the old drunkard's figure turning a corner at the foot of the hill.

"I thought so; I thought so. He sold him to you for—for a drink of whiskey."

The man whistled.

"Bring him out. I'll pay his license."

So back went Satan and the little cur to Grandmother Dean's—and Dinnie cried when Uncle Carey told her why he was taking the little cur along. With her own hands she put Satan's old collar on the little brute, took him to the kitchen, and fed him first of all. Then she went into the breakfast-room.

"Uncle Billy," she said severely, "didn't I tell you not to let Saty out?"

"Yes, Miss Dinnie," said the old butler.

"Didn't I tell you I was goin' to whoop you if you let Saty out?"

"Yes, Miss Dinnie."

Miss Dinnie pulled forth from her Christmas treasures a toy riding-whip and the old darky's eyes began to roll in mock terror.

"I'm sorry, Uncle Billy, but I des got to whoop you a little."

"Let Uncle Billy off, Dinnie," said Uncle Carey, "this is Christmas."

## CHRISTMAS NIGHT WITH SATAN

"All wite," said Dinnie, and she turned to Satan.

In his shining new collar and innocent as a cherub, Satan sat on the hearth begging for his breakfast.



56 HELL-FER-SARTAIN 57



TO  
MY BROTHER  
JAMES

## ON HELL-FER-SARTAIN CREEK

**T**HAR was a dancin'-party Christmas night on "Hell fer Sartain." Jes tu'n up the fust crick beyond the bend thar, an' climb onto a stump, an' holler about *once*, an' you'll see how the name come. Stranger, hit's *hell fer sartain*! Well, Rich Harp was thar from the headwaters, an' Harve Hall toted Nance Osborn clean across the Cumberlan'. Fust one ud swing Nance, an' then t'other. Then they'd take a pull out'n the same bottle o' moonshine, an'—fust one an' then t'other—they'd swing her agin. An' Abe Shivers a-settin' thar by the fire a-bitin' his thumbs!

Well, things was sorter whoopin', when somebody ups an' tells Harve that Rich had said somep'n' agin Nance an' him, an' somebody ups an' tells Rich that Harve had said somep'n' agin Nance an' *him*. In a minute, stranger, hit was like two wild-cats in thar. Folks got 'em parted, though, but thar was no more a-swingin' of Nance that night. Harve toted her back over the Cumberlan', an' Rich's kinsfolks tuk him up "Hell fer Sartain"; but Rich got loose, an' lit out lickety-split fer Nance Osborn's. He

## ON HELL-FER-SARTAIN CREEK

knowed Harve lived too fer over Black Mountain to go home that night, an' he rid right across the river an' up to Nance's house, an' hollered for Harve. Harve poked his head out'n the loft—he knowed whut was wanted—an' Harve says, "Uh, come in hyeh an' go to bed. Hit's too late!" An' Rich seed him a-gapin' like a chicken, an' in he walked, stumblin' might'nigh agin the bed whar Nance was a-layin', listenin' an' not sayin' a word.

Stranger, them two fellers slept together plum frien'ly, an' they et together plum frien'ly next mornin', an' they sa'ntered down to the grocery plum frien'ly. An' Rich says, "Harve," says he, "let's have a drink." "All right, Rich," says Harve. An' Rich says, "Harve," says he, "you go out'n that door an' I'll go out'n this door." "All right, Rich," says Harve, an' out they walked, steady, an' thar was two shoots shot, an' Rich an' Harve both drapped, an' in ten minutes they was stretched out on Nance's bed an' Nance was a-lopin' away fer the yarb doctor.

The gal nussed 'em both plum faithful. Rich didn't hev much to say, an' Harve didn't hev much to say. Nance was sorter quiet, an' Nance's mammy, ole Nance, jes grinned. Folks come in to ax atter 'em right peart. Abe Shivers come cl'ar 'cross the river—powerful frien'ly

## ON HELL-FER-SARTAIN CREEK

—an' ever' time Nance ud walk out to the fence with him. One time she didn't come back, an' ole Nance fotched the boys thar dinner, an' ole Nance fotched thar supper, an' then Rich he axed whut was the matter with young Nance. An' ole Nance jes snorted. Atter a while Rich says: "Harve," says he, "who tol' you that I said that word agin you an' Nance?" "Abe Shivers," says Harve. "An' who tol' you," says Harve, "that I said that word agin Nance an' you?" "Abe Shivers," says Rich. An' both says, "Well, damn me!" An' Rich tu'ned right over an' begun pullin' straws out'n the bed. He got two out, an' he bit one off, an' he says: "Harve," says he, "I reckon we better draw fer him. The shortes' gits him." An' they drawed. Well, nobody ever knowed which got the shortes' straw, stranger, but——

Thar'll be a dancin'-party comin' Christmas night on "Hell fer Sartain." Rich Harp 'll be thar from the headwaters. Harve Hall's a-goin' to tote the Widder Shivers clean across the Cumberlan'. Fust one 'll swing Nance, an' then t'other. Then they'll take a pull out'n the same bottle o' moonshine, an'—fust one an' then t'other—they'll swing her agin, jes the same. *Abe* won't be thar. He's a-settin' by a big ger fire, I reckon (ef he ain't in it), a-bitin' his thumbs!

## THROUGH THE GAP

**W**HEN thistles go adrift, the sun sets down the valley between the hills; when snow comes, it goes down behind the Cumberland and streams through a great fissure that people call the Gap. Then the last light drenches the parson's cottage under Imboden Hill, and leaves an after-glow of glory on a majestic heap that lies against the east. Sometimes it spans the Gap with a rainbow.

Strange people and strange tales come through this Gap from the Kentucky hills. Through it came these two, late one day—a man and a woman—afoot. I met them at the footbridge over Roaring Fork.

“Is thar a preacher anywhar aroun' hyeh?” he asked. I pointed to the cottage under Imboden Hill. The girl flushed slightly and turned her head away with a rather unhappy smile. Without a word, the mountaineer led the way towards town. A moment more and a half-breed Malungian passed me on the bridge and followed them.

At dusk the next day I saw the mountaineer

## THROUGH THE GAP

chopping wood at a shanty under a clump of rhododendron on the river-bank. The girl was cooking supper inside. The day following he was at work on the railroad, and on Sunday, after church, I saw the parson. The two had not been to him. Only that afternoon the mountaineer was on the bridge with another woman, hideously rouged and with scarlet ribbons fluttering from her bonnet. Passing on by the shanty, I saw the Malungian talking to the girl. She apparently paid no heed to him until, just as he was moving away, he said something mockingly, and with a nod of his head back towards the bridge. She did not look up even then, but her face got hard and white, and, looking back from the road, I saw her slipping through the bushes into the dry bed of the creek, to make sure that what the half-breed told her was true.

The two men were working side by side on the railroad when I saw them again, but on the first pay-day the doctor was called to attend the Malungian, whose head was split open with a shovel. I was one of two who went out to arrest his assailant, and I had no need to ask who he was. The mountaineer was a devil, the foreman said, and I had to club him with a pistol-butt before he would give in. He said he would get even with me; but they all say that, and I paid no attention to the threat. For a



## THROUGH THE GAP

week he was kept in the calaboose, and when I passed the shanty just after he was sent to the county-seat for trial, I found it empty. The Malungian, too, was gone. Within a fortnight the mountaineer was in the door of the shanty again. Having no accuser, he had been discharged. He went back to his work, and if he opened his lips I never knew. Every day I saw him at work, and he never failed to give me a surly look. Every dusk I saw him in his doorway, waiting, and I could guess for what. It was easy to believe that the stern purpose in his face would make its way through space and draw her to him again. And she did come back one day. I had just limped down the mountain with a sprained ankle. A crowd of women was gathered at the edge of the woods, looking with all their eyes to the shanty on the river-bank. The girl stood in the door-way. The mountaineer was coming back from work with his face down.

“He hain’t seed her yit,” said one. “He’s goin’ to kill her shore. I tol’ her he would. She said she reckoned he would, but she didn’t keer.”

For a moment I was paralyzed by the tragedy at hand. She was in the door looking at him when he raised his head. For one moment he stood still, staring, and then he started towards her with a quickened step. I started too, then,

## THROUGH THE GAP

every step a torture, and as I limped ahead she made a gesture of terror and backed into the room before him. The door closed, and I listened for a pistol-shot and a scream. It must have been done with a knife, I thought, and quietly, for when I was within ten paces of the cabin he opened the door again. His face was very white; he held one hand behind him, and he was nervously fumbling at his chin with the other. As he stepped towards me I caught the handle of a pistol in my side pocket and waited. He looked at me sharply.

“Did you say the preacher lived up thar?” he asked.

“Yes,” I said, breathlessly.

In the door-way just then stood the girl with a bonnet in her hand, and at a nod from him they started up the hill towards the cottage. They came down again after a while, he stalking ahead, and she, after the mountain fashion, behind. And after this fashion I saw them at sunset next day pass over the bridge and into the mouth of the Gap whence they came. Through this Gap come strange people and strange tales from the Kentucky hills. Over it, sometimes, is the span of a rainbow.

## A TRICK O' TRADE

**S**TRANGER, I'm a *separate* man, an' I don't *inquizite* into no man's business; but you ax me straight, an' I tell ye straight: You watch ole Tom!

Now, I'll take ole Tom Perkins' word agin anybody's 'ceptin' when hit comes to a hoss trade ur a piece o' land. Fer in the tricks o' sech, ole Tom 'lows—well, hit's diff'ent; an' I reckon, stranger, as how hit sorter is. He was a-stayin' at Tom's house, the furriner was, a-dickerin' fer a piece o' lan'—the same piece, mebbe, that you're atter now—an' Tom keeps him thar fer a week to beat him out'n a dollar, an' then won't let him pay nary a cent fer his boa'd. Now, stranger, that's Tom.

Well, Abe Shivers was a-workin' fer Tom—you've heerd tell o' Abe—an' the furriner wasn't more'n half gone afore Tom seed that Abe was up to some of his *devilmint*. Abe kin hatch up more *devilmint* in a minit than Satan hissself kin in a week; so Tom jes got Abe out'n the stable under a hoe-handle, an' tol' him to tell the whole thing straight ur he'd have to go to glory right thar. An' Abe tol'!

## A TRICK O' TRADE

'Pears like Abe had foun' a streak o' iron ore on the lan', an' had racked his jinny right down to Hazlan an' tol' the furriner, who was thar a-buyin' wild lands right an' left. Co'se Abe was goin' to make the furriner whack up fer gittin' the lan' so cheap. Well, brother, the furriner come up to Tom's an' got Tom into one o' them new-fangled trades whut the furriners calls a option—t'other feller kin git out'n hit, but you can't. The furriner 'lowed he'd send his podner up thar next day to put the thing in writin' an' close up the trade. Hit looked like ole Tom was ketched fer shore, an' ef Tom did-n't ra'r, I'd tell a man. He jes let that hoe-handle drap on Abe fer 'bout haffen hour, jes to give him time to study, an' next day thar was ole Tom a-settin' on his orchard fence a-lookin' mighty unknowin', when the furriner's podner come a-prancin' up an' axed ef old Tom Perkins lived thar.

Ole Tom jes whispers.

Now, I clean fergot to tell ye, stranger, that Abe Shivers nuver could talk out loud. He tol' so many lies that the Lawd—jes to make things even—sorter fixed Abe, I reckon, so he couldn't lie on more'n one side o' the river at a time. Ole Tom jes knowed t'other furriner had tol' this un 'bout Abe, an', shore 'nough, the feller says, sorter soft, says he:

## A TRICK O' TRADE

“Aw, you air the feller whut foun' the ore?”

Ole Tom—makin' like he was Abe, mind ye—jes whispers: “Thar hain't none thar.”

Stranger, the feller mos' fell off'n his hoss. “Whut?” says he. Ole Tom kep' a-whisper-in': “Thar hain't no ore—no nothing; ole Tom Perkins made me tell t'other furriner them lies.”

Well, sir, the feller *was* mad. “Jes whut I tol' that fool podner of mine,” he says, an' he pull out a dollar an' gives hit to Tom. Tom jes sticks out his han' with his thum' turned in jes so, an' the furriner says, “Well, ef you can't talk, you kin make purty damn good signs”; but he forks over four mo' dollars (he 'lowed ole Tom had saved him a pile o' money), an' turns his hoss an' pulls up agin. He was a-gittin' the land so durned cheap that I reckon he jes hated to let hit go, an' he says, says he: “Well, hain't the groun' rich? Won't hit raise no tobacco nur corn nur nothin'?”

Ole Tom jes whispers:

“To tell you the p'int-blank truth, stranger, that land's so durned pore that I hain't niver been able to raise my voice.”

Now, brother, I'm a *separate* man, an' I don't *inquizite* into no man's business—but you ax me straight an' I tell ye straight. Ole Tom Perkins kin trade with furriners, fer he have l'arned their ways. You watch ole Tom!



## GRAYSON'S BABY

**T**HE first snow sifted in through the Gap that night, and in a "shack" of one room and a low loft a man was dead, a woman was sick to death, and four children were barely alive; and nobody even knew. For they were hill people, who sicken, suffer, and sometimes die, like animals, and make no noise.

Grayson, the Virginian, coming down from the woods that morning, saw the big-hearted little doctor outside the door of the shack, walking up and down, with his hands in his pockets. He was whistling softly when Grayson got near, and, without stopping, pointed with his thumb within. The oldest boy sat stolidly on the one chair in the room, his little brother was on the floor hard by, and both were hugging a greasy stove. The little girl was with her mother in the bed, both almost out of sight under a heap of quilts. The baby was in a cradle, with its face uncovered, whether dead or asleep Grayson could not tell. A pine coffin was behind the door. It would not have been possible to add



## GRAYSON'S BABY

to the disorder of the room, and the atmosphere made Grayson gasp. He came out looking white. The first man to arrive thereafter took away the eldest boy, a woman picked the baby girl from the bed, and a childless young couple took up the pallid little fellow on the floor. These were step-children. The baby boy that was left was the woman's own. Nobody came for that, and Grayson went in again and looked at it a long while. So little, so old a human face he had never seen. The brow was wrinkled as with centuries of pain, and the little drawn mouth looked as though the spirit within had fought its inheritance without a murmur, and would fight on that way to the end. It was the pluck of the face that drew Grayson. "I'll take it," he said. The doctor was not without his sense of humor even then, but he nodded. "Cradle and all," he said, gravely. And Grayson put both on one shoulder and walked away. He had lost the power of giving further surprise in that town, and had he met every man he knew, not one of them would have felt at liberty to ask him what he was doing. An hour later the doctor found the child in Grayson's room, and Grayson still looking at it.

"Is it going to live, doctor?"

The doctor shook his head. Doubtful. Look at the color. It's starved. There's noth-

## GRAYSON'S BABY

ing to do but to watch it and feed it. You can do that."

So Grayson watched it, with a fascination of which he was hardly conscious. Never for one instant did its look change—the quiet, unyielding endurance that no faith and no philosophy could ever bring to him. It was ideal courage, that look, to accept the inevitable but to fight it just that way. Half the little mountain town was talking next day—that such a tragedy was possible by the public road-side, with relief within sound of the baby's cry. The oldest boy was least starved. Might made right in an extremity like his, and the boy had taken care of himself. The young couple who had the second lad in charge said they had been wakened at daylight the next morning by some noise in the room. Looking up, they saw the little fellow at the fireplace breaking an egg. He had built a fire, had got eggs from the kitchen, and was cooking his breakfast. The little girl was mischievous and cheery in spite of her bad plight, and nobody knew of the baby except Grayson and the doctor. Grayson would let nobody else in. As soon as it was well enough to be peevish and to cry, he took it back to its mother, who was still abed. A long, dark mountaineer was there, of whom the woman seemed half afraid. He followed Grayson outside.

## GRAYSON'S BABY

"Say, podner," he said, with an unpleasant smile, "ye don't go up to Cracker's Neck fer nothin', do ye?"

The woman had lived at Cracker's Neck before she appeared at the Gap, and it did not come to Grayson what the man meant until he was half-way to his room. Then he flushed hot and wheeled back to the cabin, but the mountaineer was gone.

"Tell that fellow he had better keep out of my way," he said to the woman, who understood, and wanted to say something, but not knowing how, nodded simply. In a few days the other children went back to the cabin, and day and night Grayson went to see the child, until it was out of danger, and afterwards. It was not long before the women in town complained that the mother was ungrateful. When they sent things to eat to her the servant brought back word that she had called out, "'Set them over thar,' without so much as a thanky." One message was that "she didn' want no second-hand victuals from nobody's table." Somebody suggested sending the family to the poor-house. The mother said "she'd go out on her crutches and hoe corn fust, and that the people who talked 'bout sendin' her to the po'house had better save their breath to make prayers with." One day she was hired to do some washing. The

## GRAYSON'S BABY

mistress of the house happened not to rise until ten o'clock. Next morning the mountain woman did not appear until that hour. "She wasn't goin' to work a lick while that woman was a-layin' in bed," she said, frankly. And when the lady went down town, she too disappeared. Nor would she, she explained to Grayson, "while that woman was a-struttin' the streets."

After that, one by one, they let her alone, and the woman made not a word of complaint. Within a week she was working in the fields, when she should have been back in bed. The result was that the child sickened again. The old look came back to its face, and Grayson was there night and day. He was having trouble out in Kentucky about this time, and he went to the Blue Grass pretty often. Always, however, he left money with me to see that the child was properly buried if it should die while he was gone; and once he telegraphed to ask how it was. He said he was sometimes afraid to open my letters for fear that he should read that the baby was dead. The child knew Grayson's voice, his step. It would go to him from its own mother. When it was sickest and lying torpid it would move the instant he stepped into the room, and, when he spoke, would hold out its thin arms, without opening its eyes, and for hours Grayson

## GRAYSON'S BABY

would walk the floor with the troubled little baby over his shoulder. I thought several times it would die when, on one trip, Grayson was away for two weeks. One midnight, indeed, I found the mother moaning, and three female harpies about the cradle. The baby was dying this time, and I ran back for a flask of whiskey. Ten minutes late with the whiskey that night would have been too late. The baby got to know me and my voice during that fortnight, but it was still in danger when Grayson got back, and we went to see it together. It was very weak, and we both leaned over the cradle, from either side, and I saw the pity and affection—yes, hungry, half-shamed affection—in Grayson's face. The child opened its eyes, looked from one to the other, and held out its arms to *me*. Grayson should have known that the child forgot—that it would forget its own mother. He turned sharply, and his face was a little pale. He gave something to the woman, and not till then did I notice that her soft black eyes never left him while he was in the cabin. The child got well; but Grayson never went to the shack again, and he said nothing when I came in one night and told him that some mountaineer—a long, dark fellow—had taken the woman, the children, and the household gods of the shack back into the mountains.



## GRAYSON'S BABY

“They don't grieve long,” I said, “these people.”

But long afterwards I saw the woman again along the dusty road that leads into the Gap. She had heard over in the mountains that Grayson was dead, and had walked for two days to learn if it was true. I pointed back towards Bee Rock, and told her that he had fallen from a cliff back there. She did not move, nor did her look change. Moreover, she said nothing, and, being in a hurry, I had to ride on.

At the foot-bridge over Roaring Fork I looked back. The woman was still there, under the hot mid-day sun and in the dust of the road, motionless.



## COURTIN' ON CUTSHIN

**H**IT was this way, stranger. When hit comes to handlin' a right peert gal, Jeb Somers air about the porest man on Fryin' Pan, I reckon; an' Polly Ann Sturgill have got the vineg'rest tongue on Cutshin or any other crick.

So the boys over on Fryin' Pan made it up to git 'em together. Abe Shivers—you've heerd tell o' Abe—tol' Jeb that Polly Ann had seed him in Hazlan (which she hadn't, of co'se), an' had said p'int-blank that he was the likeliest feller she'd seed in them mountains. An' he tol' Polly Ann that Jeb was ravin' crazy 'bout her. The pure misery of it jes made him plumb delirious, Abe said; an' 'f Polly Ann wanted to find her match fer languige an' talkin' out peert—well, she jes ought to strike Jeb Somers. Fact is, stranger, Jeb Somers air might' nigh a idgit; but Jeb 'lowed he'd rack right over on Cutshin an' set up with Polly Ann Sturgill; an' Abe tells Polly Ann the king bee air comin'. An' Polly Ann's cousin, Nance Osborn, comes over from Hell fer Sartain (whut runs into Kingdom-Come) to stay all night an' see the fun.

## COURTIN' ON CUTSHIN

Now, I hain't been a-raftin' logs down to the settlemint o' Kaintuck fer nigh on to twenty year fer nothin'. An' I know gallivantin' is diff'ent with us mountain fellers an' you furriners, in the premises, anyways, as them lawyers up to court says; though I reckon hit's purty much the same atter the premises is over. Whar you says "courtin'," now, we says "talkin' to." Sallie Spurlock over on Fryin' Pan is a-talkin' to Jim Howard now. Sallie's sister hain't niver talked to no man. An' whar you says "makin' a call on a young lady," we says "settin' up with a gal"! An', stranger, we does it. We hain't got more'n one room hardly ever in these mountains, an' we're jes obleeged to set up to do any courtin' at all.

Well, you go over to Sallie's to stay all night some time, an' purty soon atter supper Jim Howard comes in. The ole man an' the ole woman goes to bed, an' the chil'un an' you go to bed, an' ef you keeps one eye open you'll see Jim's cheer an' Sallie's cheer a-movin' purty soon, till they gets plumb together. Then, stranger, hit begins. Now I want ye to understand that settin' up means business. We don't 'low no foolishness in these mountains; an' 'f two fellers happens to meet at the same house, they jes makes the gal say which one she likes best, an' t'other one gits! Well, you'll see Jim put his arm 'round Sallie's

## COURTIN' ON CUTSHIN

neck an' whisper a long while—jes so. Mebbe you've noticed whut fellers us mountain folks air fer whisperin'. You've seed fellers a-whisperin' all over Hazlan on court day, hain't ye? Ole Tom Perkins 'll put his arm aroun' yo' neck an' whisper in yo' year ef he's ten miles out'n the woods. I reckon thar's jes so much devilmint a-goin' on in these mountains, folks is naturely afeerd to talk out loud.

Well, Jim lets go an' Sallie puts her arm aroun' Jim's neck an' whispers a long while—jes so; an' 'f you happen to wake up anywhar to two o'clock in the mornin' you'll see jes that a-goin' on. Brother, that's settin' up.

Well, Jeb Somers, as I was a-sayin' in the premises, 'lowed he'd rack right over on Cutshin an' set up with Polly Ann comin' Christmas night. An' Abe tells Polly Ann Jeb says he aims to have her fer a Christmas gift afore mornin'. Polly Ann jes sniffed sorter, but you know women folks air always mighty ambitious jes to *see* a feller anyways, 'f he's a-pinin' fer 'em. So Jeb come, an' Jeb was fixed up now fittin' to kill. Jeb had his hair oiled down nice an' slick, and his mustache was jes black as powder could make hit. Naturely hit was red; but a feller can't do nothin' in these mountains with a red mustache; an' Jeb had a big black ribbon tied in the butt o' the 'bigges' pistol Abe Shivers could borrer fer him—

## COURTIN' ON CUTSHIN

hit was a badge o' death an' deestruction to his enemies, Abe said, an' I tell ye Jeb did look like a man. He never opened his mouth attter he says "howdy" — Jeb never does say nothin'; Jeb's one o' them fellers whut hides thar lack o' brains by a-lookin' solemn an' a-keepin' still, but thar don't nobody say much tell the ole folks air gone to bed, an' Polly Ann jes 'lowed Jeb was a-waitin'. Fact is, stranger, Abe Shivers had got Jeb a leetle disguised by liquer, an' he did look fat an' sassy, ef he couldn't talk, a-settin' over in the corner a-plunkin the banjer an' a-knockin' off "Sour-wood Mountain" an' "Jinny Git Aroun'" an' "Soapsuds over the Fence."

"Chickens a-crowin' on Sour-wood Mountain,  
Heh-o-dee-um-dee-eedy-dahdy-dee!  
Git yo' dawgs an' we'll go huntin',  
Heh-o-dee-um-dee-eedy-dahdy-dee!"

An' when Jeb comes to

"I've got a gal at the head o' the holler,  
Heh-o-dee-um-dee-eedy-dahdy-dee!"

he jes turns one eye 'round on Polly Ann, an' then swings his chin aroun' as though he didn't give a cuss fer nothin'.

"She won't come, an' I won't foller,  
Heh-o-dee-um-dee-eedy-dahdy-dee!"

## COURTIN' ON CUTSHIN

Well, sir, Nance seed that Polly Ann was a-eyin' Jeb sort o' flustered like, an' she come might' nigh splittin' right thar an' a-sp'ilin' the fun, fer she knowed what a skeery fool Jeb was. An' when the ole folks goes to bed, Nance lays thar under a quilt a-watchin' an' a-listenin'. Well, Jeb knowed the premises, ef he couldn't talk, an' purty soon Nance heerd Jeb's cheer creak a leetle, an' she says, Jeb's a-comin', and Jeb was; an' Polly Ann 'lowed Jeb was jes a leetle *too* resolute an' quick-like, an' she got her hand ready to give him one lick anyways fer bein' so brigaty. I don't know as she'd 'a' hit him more'n *once*. Jeb had a farm, an' Polly Ann—well, Polly Ann was a-gittin' along. But Polly Ann sot thar jes as though she didn't know Jeb was a-comin', an' Jeb stopped once an' says,

“ You hain't got nothin' agin me, has ye? ”

An' Polly Ann says, sorter quick,

“ Naw; ef I had, I'd push it.”

Well, Jeb mos' fell off his cheer, when, ef he hadn't been sech a skeery idgit, he'd 'a' knowed that Polly Ann was plain open an' shet a-biddin' fer him. But he sot thar like a knot on a log fer haffen hour, an' then he rickollected, I reckon, that Abe had tol' him Polly Ann was peppery an' he mustn't mind, fer Jeb begun a-movin' ag'in till he was slam-bang ag'in Polly Ann's cheer. An' thar he sot like a punkin, not sayin'



## COURTIN' ON CUTSHIN

a word nur doin' nothin'. An' while Polly Ann was a-wonderin' ef he was gone plumb crazy, blame me ef that durned fool didn't turn roun' to that peppery gal an' say,

“Booh, Polly Ann!”

Well, Nance had to stuff the bedquilt in her mouth right thar to keep from hollerin' out loud, fer Polly Ann's hand was a hangin' down by the cheer, jes a-waitin' fer a job, and Nance seed the fingers a-twitchin'. An' Jeb waits another haffen hour, an' Jeb says,

“Ortern't I be killed?”

“Whut fer?” says Polly Ann, sorter sharp. An' Jeb says, “Fer bein' so devilish.”

Well, brother, Nance snorted right out thar, an' Polly Ann Sturgill's hand riz up jes once; an' I've heerd Jeb Somers say the next time he jumps out o' the Fryin' Pan he's a-goin' to take hell-fire 'stid o' Cutshin fer a place to light.



## THE MESSAGE IN THE SAND

**S**TRANGER, you furriners don't niver seem to consider that a woman has always got the devil to fight in two people at once! Hit's two agin one, I tell ye, an' hit hain't fa'r.

That's what I said more'n two year ago, when Rosie Branham was a-layin' up thar at Dave Hall's, white an' mos' dead. An', *God*, boys, I says, that leetle thing in thar by her shorely can't be to blame.

Thar hain't been a word agin Rosie sence; an', stranger, I reckon thar niver will be. Fer, while the gal hain't got hide o' kith or kin, thar air two fellers up hyeh sorter lookin' atter Rosie; an' one of 'em is the shootin'es' man on this crick, I reckon, 'cept one; an', stranger, that's t'other.

Rosie kep' her mouth shet fer a long while; an' I reckon as how the feller 'lowed she wasn't goin' to tell. Co'se the woman folks got hit out'n her — they al'ays gits whut they want, as you know—an' thar the sorry cuss was—a-livin' up thar in the Bend, jes aroun' that bluff o' lorrel yander, a-lookin' pious, an' a-singin', an' a-sayin' Amen louder 'n anybody when thar was meetin'.

## THE MESSAGE IN THE SAND

Well, my boy Jim an' a lot o' fellers jes went up fer him right away. I don't know as the boys would 'a' killed him *exactly* ef they had kitched him, though they mought; but they got Abe Shivers, as tol' the feller they was a-comin'—you've heard tell o' Abe—an' they mos' beat Abraham Shivers to death. Stranger, the sorry cuss was Dave. Rosie hadn't no daddy an' no mammy; an' she was jes a-workin' at Dave's fer her victuals an' clo'es. 'Pears like the pore gal was jes tricked into evil. Looked like she was sorter 'witched— an' anyways, stranger, she was a-fightin' Satan in *herself*, as well as in Dave. Hit was two agin one, I tell ye, an' hit wasn't fa'r.

C'ose they turned Rosie right out in the road. I hain't got a word to say agin Dave's wife fer that; an' atter a while the boys lets Dave come back, to take keer o' his ole mammy, of co'se, but I tell ye Dave's a-playin' a purty lonsesome tune. He keeps purty shy *yit*. He don't niver sa'nter down this way. 'Pears like he don't seem to think hit's healthy fer him down hyeh, an' I reckon Dave's right.

Rosie? Oh, well, I sorter tuk Rosie in myself. Yes, she's been livin' thar in the shack with me an' my boy Jim, an' the— Why, thar he is now, stranger. That's him a-wallerin' out thar in the road. Do you reckon thar'd be a

## THE MESSAGE IN THE SAND

single thing agin that leetle cuss ef he had to stan' up on Judgment Day jes as he is now?

Look hyeh, stranger, whut you reckon the Lawd kep' a-writin' thar on the groun' that day when them fellers was a-pesterin' him about that pore woman? Don't you jes know he was a writin' 'bout sech as *him*—an' Rosie? I tell ye, brother, he writ thar jes what I'm al'ays a-sayin'.

Hit hain't the woman's fault. I said it more'n two years ago, when Rosie was up thar at ole Dave's, an' I said it yestiddy, when my boy Jim come to me an' 'lowed as how he aimed to take Rosie down to town to-day an' git married.

"You ricollect, dad," says Jim, "her mammy?"

"Yes, Jim," I says; "all the better reason not to be too hard on Rosie."

I'm a-lookin' fer 'em both back right now, stranger; an' ef you will, I'll be mighty glad to have ye stay right hyeh to the infair this very night. Thar nuver was a word agin Rosie afore, thar hain't been sence, an' you kin ride up an' down this river till the crack o' doom an' you'll nuver hear a word agin her ag'in. Fer, as I tol' you, my boy, Jim is the shootin'es' feller on this crick, I reckon, 'cept *one*, an', stranger, that's *me!*

## THE SENATOR'S LAST TRADE

**A** DROVE of lean cattle were swinging easily over Black Mountain, and behind them came a big man with wild black hair and a bushy beard. Now and then he would gnaw at his mustache with his long, yellow teeth, or would sit down to let his lean horse rest, and would flip meaninglessly at the bushes with a switch. Sometimes his bushy head would droop over on his breast, and he would snap it up sharply and start painfully on. Robber, cattle-thief, outlaw he might have been in another century; for he filled the figure of any robber hero in life or romance, and yet he was only the Senator from Bell, as he was known in the little Kentucky capital; or, as he was known in his mountain home, just the Senator, who had toiled and schemed and grown rich and grown poor; who had suffered long and was kind.

Only that Christmas he had gutted every store in town. "Give me everything you have, brother," he said, across each counter; and next day every man, woman, and child in the mountain town had a present from the Senator's

## THE SENATOR'S LAST TRADE

hands. He looked like a brigand that day, as he looked now, but he called every man his brother, and his eye, while black and lustreless as night, was as brooding and just as kind.

When the boom went down, with it and with everybody else went the Senator. Slowly he got dusty, ragged, long of hair. He looked tortured and ever-restless. You never saw him still; always he swept by you, flapping his legs on his lean horse or his arms in his rickety buggy here, there, everywhere — turning, twisting, fighting his way back to freedom—and not a murmur. Still was every man his brother, and if some forgot his once open hand, he forgot it no more completely than did the Senator. He went very far to pay his debts. He felt honor bound, indeed, to ask his sister to give back the farm that he had given her, which, very properly people said, she declined to do. Nothing could kill hope in the Senator's breast; he would hand back the farm in another year, he said; but the sister was firm, and without a word still, the Senator went other ways and schemed through the nights, and worked and rode and walked and traded through the days, until now, when the light was beginning to glimmer, his end was come.

This was the Senator's last trade, and in



## THE SENATOR'S LAST TRADE

sight, down in a Kentucky valley, was home. Strangely enough, the Senator did not care at all, and he had just enough sanity left to wonder why, and to be worried. It was the "walking typhoid" that had caught up with him, and he was listless, and he made strange gestures and did foolish things as he stumbled down the mountain. He was going over a little knoll now, and he could see the creek that ran around his house, but he was not touched. He would just as soon have lain down right where he was, or have turned around and gone back, except that it was hot and he wanted to get to the water. He remembered that it was nigh Christmas; he saw the snow about him and the cakes of ice in the creek. He knew that he ought not to be hot, and yet he was—so hot that he refused to reason with himself even a minute, and hurried on. It was odd that it should be so, but just about that time, over in Virginia, a cattle-dealer, nearing home, stopped to tell a neighbor how he had tricked some black-whiskered fool up in the mountains. It may have been just when he was laughing aloud over there, that the Senator, over here, tore his woollen shirt from his great hairy chest and rushed into the icy stream, clapping his arms to his burning sides and shouting in his frenzy.

"If he had lived a little longer," said a con-



## THE SENATOR'S LAST TRADE

stituent, "he would have lost the next election. He hadn't the money, you know."

"If he had lived a little longer," said the mountain preacher high up on Yellow Creek, "I'd have got that trade I had on hand with him through. Not that I wanted him to die, but if he had to—why——"

"If he had lived a little longer," said the Senator's lawyer, "he would have cleaned off the score against him."

"If he had lived a little longer," said the Senator's sister, not meaning to be unkind, "he would have got all I have."

That was what life held for the Senator. Death was more kind.

## PREACHIN' ON KINGDOM-COME

I'VE told ye, stranger, that Hell fer Sartain empties, as it oughter, of co'se, into Kingdom-Come. You can ketch the devil 'most any day in the week on Hell fer Sartain, an' sometimes you can git Glory everlastin' on Kingdom-Come. Hit's the only meetin'-house thar in twenty miles aroun'.

Well, the reg'lar rider, ole Jim Skaggs, was dead, an' the bretherin was a-lookin' aroun' fer somebody to step into ole Jim's shoes. Thar'd been one young feller up thar from the settle-mints, a-cavortin' aroun', an' they was studyin' 'bout gittin' him.

"Bretherin' an' sisteren," I says, atter the leetle chap was gone, "he's got the fortitood to speak an' he shorely is well favored. He's got a mighty good hawk eye fer spyin' out evil—an' the gals; he can outholler ole Jim; an' *if*," I says, "any *idees* ever comes to him, he'll be a hell-rouser shore—but they ain't comin'!" An', so sayin', I takes my foot in my hand an' steps fer home.

Stranger, them fellers over thar hain't seed

## PREACHIN' ON KINGDOM-COME

much o' this world. Lots of 'em niver seed the cyars; some of 'em niver seed a wagon. An' atter jowerin' an' noratin' fer 'bout two hours, what you reckon they said they aimed to do? They believed they'd take that ar man Beecher, ef they could git him to come. They'd heerd o' Henry endurin' the war, an' they knowed he was agin the rebs, an' they wanted Henry if they could jes git him to come.

Well, I snorted, an' the feud broke out on Hell fer Sartain betwixt the Days an' the Dillons. Mace Day shot Daws Dillon's brother, as I rickollect — somep'n's al'ays a-startin' up that plaguey war an' a-makin' things frolicsome over thar — an' ef it hadn't a-been fer a tall young feller with black hair an' a scar across his forehead, who was a-goin' through the mountains a-settlin' these wars, blame me ef I believe thar ever would 'a' been any mo' preachin' on Kingdom-Come. This feller comes over from Hazlan an' says he aims to hold a meetin' on Kingdom-Come. "Brother," I says, "that's what no preacher have ever did whilst this war is a-goin' on." An' he says, sort o' quiet, "Well, then, I reckon I'll have to do what no preacher have ever did." An' I ups an' says: "Brother, an ole jedge come up here once from the settlements to hold couht. 'Jedge,' I says, 'that's what no jedge have ever did without

## PREACHIN' ON KINGDOM-COME

soldiers since this war's been a-goin' on.' An', brother, the jedge's words was yours, p'int-blank. 'All right,' he says, 'then I'll have to do what no other jedge have ever did.' An', brother," says I to the preacher, "the jedge done it shore. He jes laid under the couht-house fer two days whilst the boys fit over him. An' when I sees the jedge a-makin' tracks fer the settlemint, I says, 'Jedge,' I says, 'you spoke a parable shore.' "

Well, sir, the long preacher looked jes as though he was a-sayin' to hissself, "Yes, I hear ye, but I don't heed ye," an' when he says, "Jes the same, I'm a-goin' to hold a meetin' on Kingdom-Come," why, I jes takes my foot in my hand an' ag'in I steps fer home.

That night, stranger, I seed another feller from Hazlan, who was a-tellin' how this here preacher had stopped the war over thar, an' had got the Marcums an' Braytons to shakin' hands; an' next day ole Tom Perkins stops in an' says that *wharas* there mought 'a' been preachin' somewhar an' sometime, thar nuver had been *preachin'* afore on Kingdom-Come. So I goes over to the meetin'-house, an' they was all thar—Daws Dillon an' Mace Day, the leaders in the war, an' Abe Shivers (you've heerd tell o' Abe) who was a-carryin' tales from one side to t'other an' a-stirrin' up hell ginerally, as Abe

## PREACHIN' ON KINGDOM-COME

most al'ays is; an' thar was Daws on one side o' the meetin'-house an' Mace on t'other, an' both jes a-watchin' fer t'other to make a move, an' thar'd 'a' been billy-hell to pay right thar! Stranger, that long preacher talked jes as easy as I'm a-talkin' now, an' hit was p'int-blank as the feller from Hazlan said. You jes ought 'a' heerd him tellin' about the Lawd a-bein' as pore as any feller thar, an' a-makin' barns an' fences an' ox-yokes an' sech like; an' not a-bein' able to write his own name—havin' to make his mark mebbe—when he started out to save the world. An' how they tuk him an' nailed him onto a cross when he'd come down fer nothin' but to save 'em; an' stuck a spear big as a corn-knife into his side, an' give him vinegar; an' his own mammy a-standin' down thar on the ground a-cryin' an' a-watchin' him; an' he a-fergivin' all of 'em then an' thar!

Thar nuver had been nothin' like that afore on Kingdom-Come, an' all along I heerd fellers a-layin' thar guns down; an' when the preacher called out fer sinners, blame me ef the fust feller that riz wasn't Mace Day. An' Mace says, "Stranger, 'f what you say is true, I reckon the Lawd 'll fergive me too, but I don't believe Daws Dillon ever will," an' Mace stood thar lookin' around fer Daws. An' all of a sudden the preacher got up straight an' called out, "Is

## PREACHIN' ON KINGDOM-COME

thar a human in this house mean an' sorry enough to stand betwixt a man an' his Maker"? An' right thar, stranger, Daws riz. "Naw, by God, thar hain't!" Daws says, an' he walks up to Mace a-holdin' out his hand, an' they all busts out cryin' an' shakin' hands—Days an' Dillons—jes as the preacher had made 'em do over in Hazlan. An' atter the thing was over, I steps up to the preacher an' I says:

"Brother," I says, "*you* spoke a parable, shore."



## THE PASSING OF ABRAHAM SHIVERS

I TELL ye, boys, hit hain't often a feller has the chance o' doin' so much good jes by *dyin'*. Fer 'f Abe Shivers air gone, shorely gone, the rest of us—every durn one of us—air a-goin' to be saved. Fer Abe Shivers—you hain't heerd tell o' *Abe*? Well, you must be a stranger in these mountains o' Kaintuck, shore.

“I don't know, stranger, as Abe ever was borned; nobody in these mountains knows it 'f he was. The fust time I ever heerd tell o' Abe he was a-hollerin' fer his rights one mawnin' at daylight, endurin' the war, jes outside o' ole Tom Perkins' door on Fryin' Pan. Abe was left thar by some home-gyard, I reckon. Well, nobody air ever turned out'n doors in these mountains, as you know, an' Abe got his rights that mawnin', an' he's been a-gittin' 'em ever sence. Tom already had a houseful, but 'f any feller got the bigges' hunk o' corn-bread, that feller was Abe; an' ef any feller got a-whalin', hit wasn't Abe.

“Abe tuk to lyin' right naturely—looked

## THE PASSING OF ABRAHAM SHIVERS

like—afore he could talk. Fact is, Abe nuver could do nothin' but jes whisper. Still, Abe could manage to send a lie funder with that rattlin' whisper than ole Tom could with that big horn o' hisn what tells the boys the revenoos air comin' up Fryin' Pan.

“ Didn't take Abe long to git to braggin' an' drinkin' an' naggin' an' hectorin'—everything, 'mos', 'cept fightin'. Nobody ever drawed Abe Shivers into a fight. I don't know as he was afeerd; looked like Abe was a-havin' sech a tarnation good time with his devilmint he jes didn't want to run no risk o' havin' hit stopped. An' sech devilmint! Hit ud take a coon's age, I reckon, to tell ye.

“ The boys was a-goin' up the river one night to git ole Dave Hall fer trickin' Rosie Branham into evil. Some feller goes ahead an' tells ole Dave they's a-comin'. Hit was Abe. Some feller finds a streak o' ore on ole Tom Perkins' land, an' racks his jinny down to town, an' tells a furriner thar, an' Tom comes might' nigh sellin' the land fer nothin'. Now Tom raised Abe, but, jes the same, the feller was Abe.

“ One night somebody guides the revenoos in on Hell fer Sartain, an' they cuts up four stills. Hit was Abe. The same night, mind ye, a feller slips in among the revenoos while they's asleep, and cuts off their hosses' manes an' tails—muled

## THE PASSING OF ABRAHAM SHIVERS

every durned critter uv 'em. Stranger, hit was Abe. An' as fer women-folks—well, Abe was the ill-favoreddest feller I ever see, an' he couldn't talk; still, Abe was sassy, an' you know how sass counts with the gals; an' Abe's whisperin' come in jes as handy as any feller's settin' up; so 'f ever you seed a man with a Winchester a-lookin' fer the feller who had cut him out, stranger, he was a-lookin' fer Abe.

“Somebody tells Harve Hall, up thar at a dance on Hell fer Sartain one Christmas night, that Rich Harp had said somep'n agin him an' Nance Osborn. An' somebody tells Rich that Harve had said somep'n agin Nance an' *him*. Hit was one an' the same feller, stranger, an' the feller was Abe. Well, while Rich an' Harve was a-gittin' well, somebody runs off with Nance. Hit was Abe. Then Rich an' Harve jes draws straws fer a feller. Stranger, they drawed fer Abe. Hit's purty hard to believe that Abe air gone, 'cept that Rich Harp an' Harve Hall don't never draw no straws fer nothin'; but 'f by the grace o' Goddlemighty Abe air gone, why, as I was a-sayin', the rest of us—every durned one of us—air a-goin' to be saved, shore. Fer Abe's gone fust, an' ef thar's only one Judgment Day, the Lawd 'll nuver git to us.”

## A PURPLE RHODODENDRON

**T**HE purple rhododendron is rare. Up in the Gap here, Bee Rock, hung out over Roaring Rock, blossoms with it—as a gray cloud purples with the sunrise. This rock was tossed lightly on edge when the earth was young, and stands vertical. To get the flowers you climb the mountain to one side, and, balancing on the rock's thin edge, slip down by roots and past rattlesnake dens till you hang out over the water and reach for them. To avoid snakes it is best to go when it is cool, at daybreak.

I know but one other place in this southwest corner of Virginia where there is another bush of purple rhododendron, and one bush only is there. This hangs at the throat of a peak not far away, whose ageless gray head is bent over a ravine that sinks like a spear thrust into the side of the mountain. Swept only by high wind and eagle wings as this is, I yet knew one man foolhardy enough to climb to it for a flower. He brought one blossom down: and to this day I do not know that it was not the act of a coward; yes, though Grayson did it, actually smiling all the way from peak to ravine, and though he was

## A PURPLE RHODODENDRON

my best friend—best loved then and since. I believe he was the strangest man I have ever known, and I say this with thought; for his eccentricities were sincere. In all he did I cannot remember having even suspected anything theatrical but once.

We were all Virginians or Kentuckians at the Gap, and Grayson was a Virginian. You might have guessed that he was a Southerner from his voice and from the way he spoke of women—but no more. Otherwise, he might have been a Moor, except for his color, which was about the only racial characteristic he had. He had been educated abroad and, after the English habit, had travelled everywhere. And yet I can imagine no more lonely way between the eternities than the path Grayson trod alone.

He came to the Gap in the early days, and just why he came I never knew. He had studied the iron question a long time, he told me, and what I thought reckless speculation was, it seems, deliberate judgment to him. His money "in the dirt," as the phrase was, Grayson got him a horse and rode the hills and waited. He was intimate with nobody. Occasionally he would play poker with us and sometimes he drank a good deal, but liquor never loosed his tongue. At poker his face told as little as the back of his cards, and he won more than admiration—even



## A PURPLE RHODODENDRON

from the Kentuckians, who are artists at the game; but the money went from a free hand, and, after a diversion like this, he was apt to be moody and to keep more to himself than ever. Every fortnight or two he would disappear, always over Sunday. In three or four days he would turn up again, black with brooding, and then he was the last man to leave the card-table or he kept away from it altogether. Where he went nobody knew; and he was not the man anybody would question.

One night two of us Kentuckians were sitting in the club, and from a home paper I read aloud the rumored engagement of a girl we both knew—who was famous for beauty in the Bluegrass, as was her mother before her and the mother before her—to an unnamed Virginian. Grayson sat near, smoking a pipe; and when I read the girl's name I saw him take the meerschaum from his lips, and I felt his eyes on me. It was a mystery how, but I knew at once that Grayson was the man. He sought me out after that and seemed to want to make friends. I was willing, or, rather he made me more than willing; for he was irresistible to me, as I imagine he would have been to anybody. We got to walking together and riding together at night, and we were soon rather intimate; but for a long time he never so much as spoke the girl's name. Indeed, he



## A PURPLE RHODODENDRON

kept away from the Bluegrass for nearly two months; but when he did go he stayed a fortnight.

This time he came for me as soon as he got back to the Gap. It was just before midnight, and we went as usual back of Imboden Hill, through moon-dappled beeches, and Grayson turned off into the woods where there was no path, both of us silent. We rode through tremulous, shining leaves—Grayson's horse choosing a way for himself—and, threshing through a patch of high, strong weeds, we circled past an amphitheatre of deadened trees whose crooked arms were tossed out into the moonlight, and halted on the spur. The moon was poised over Morris's farm; South Fork was shining under us like a loop of gold, the mountains lay about in tranquil heaps, and the moon-mist rose luminous between them. There Grayson turned to me with an eager light in his eyes that I had never seen before.

"This has a new beauty to-night!" he said; and then "I told her about you, and she said that she used to know you—well." I was glad my face was in shadow—I could hardly keep back a brutal laugh—and Grayson, unseeing, went on to speak of her as I had never heard any man speak of any woman. In the end, he said that she had just promised to be his wife. I answered

## A PURPLE RHODODENDRON

nothing. Other men, I knew, had said that with the same right, perhaps, and had gone from her to go back no more. And I was one of them. Grayson had met her at White Sulphur five years before, and had loved her ever since. She had known it from the first, he said, and I guessed then what was going to happen to him. I marvelled, listening to the man, for it was the star of constancy in her white soul that was most lustrous to him—and while I wondered the marvel became a commonplace. Did not every lover think his loved one exempt from the frailty that names other women? There is no ideal of faith or of purity that does not live in countless women to-day. I believe that; but could I not recall one friend who walked with Divinity through pine woods for one immortal spring, and who, being sick to death, was quite finished—learning her at last? Did I not know lovers who believed sacred to themselves, in the name of love, lips that had been given to many another without it? And now did I not know—but I knew too much, and to Grayson I said nothing.

That spring the "boom" came. Grayson's property quadrupled in value and quadrupled again. I was his lawyer, and I plead with him to sell; but Grayson laughed. He was not speculating; he had invested on judgment; he would sell only at a certain figure. The figure was

## A PURPLE RHODODENDRON

actually reached, and Grayson let half go. The boom fell, and Grayson took the tumble with a jest. It would come again in the autumn, he said, and he went off to meet the girl at White Sulphur.

I worked right hard that summer, but I missed him, and I surely was glad when he came back. Something was wrong; I saw it at once. He did not mention her name, and for a while he avoided even me. I sought him then, and gradually I got him into our old habit of walking up into the Gap and of sitting out after supper on a big rock in the valley, listening to the run of the river and watching the afterglow over the Cumberland, the moon rise over Wallen's Ridge and the stars come out. Waiting for him to speak, I learned for the first time then another secret of his wretched melancholy. It was the hopelessness of that time perhaps, that disclosed it. Grayson had lost the faith of his childhood. Most men do that at some time or other, but Grayson had no business, no profession, no art in which to find relief. Indeed, there was but one substitute possible, and that came like a gift straight from the God whom he denied. Love came, and Grayson's ideals of love, as of everything else, were morbid and quixotic. He believed that he owed it to the woman he should marry never to have loved another. He had

## A PURPLE RHODODENDRON

loved but one woman, he said, and he should love but one. I believed him then literally when he said that his love for the Kentucky girl was his religion now—the only anchor left him in his sea of troubles, the only star that gave him guiding light. Without this love, what then?

I had a strong impulse to ask him, but Grayson shivered, as though he divined my thought, and, in some relentless way, our talk drifted to the question of suicide. I was not surprised that he rather defended it. Neither of us said anything new, only I did not like the way he talked. He was too deliberate, too serious, as though he were really facing a possible fact. He had no religious scruples, he said, no family ties; he had nothing to do with bringing himself into life; why—if it was not worth living, not bearable—why should he not end it? He gave the usual authority, and I gave the usual answer. Religion aside, if we did not know that we were here for some purpose, we did not know that we were not; and here we were anyway, and our duty was plain. Desertion was the act of a coward, and that Grayson could not deny.

That autumn the crash of '91 came across the water from England, and Grayson gave up. He went to Richmond, and came back with money enough to pay off his notes, and I think it took nearly all he had. Still, he played poker steadily

## A PURPLE RHODODENDRON

now—for poker had been resumed when it was no longer possible to gamble in lots—he drank a good deal, and he began just at this time to take a singular interest in our volunteer police guard. He had always been on hand when there was trouble, and I shan't soon forget him the day Senator Mahone spoke, when we were punching a crowd of mountaineers back with cocked Winchesters. He had lost his hat in a struggle with one giant; he looked half crazy with anger, and yet he was white and perfectly cool, and I noticed that he never had to tell a man but once to stand back. Now he was the first man to answer a police whistle. When we were guarding Talt Hall, he always volunteered when there was any unusual risk to run. When we raided the Pound to capture a gang of desperadoes, he insisted on going ahead as spy; and when we got restless lying out in the woods waiting for daybreak, and the captain suggested a charge on the cabin, Grayson was by his side when it was made. Grayson sprang through the door first, and he was the man who thrust his reckless head up into the loft and lighted a match to see if the murderers were there. Most of us did foolish things in those days under stress of excitement, but Grayson, I saw, was weak enough to be reckless. His trouble with the girl, whatever it was, was serious enough to make him ap-



## A PURPLE RHODODENDRON

parently care little whether he were alive or dead. And still I saw that not yet even had he lost hope. He was having a sore fight with his pride, and he got body-worn and heart-sick over it. Of course he was worsted, and in the end, from sheer weakness, he went back to her once more.

I shall never see another face like his when Grayson came back that last time. I never noticed before that there were silver hairs about his temples. He stayed in his room, and had his meals sent to him. He came out only to ride, and then at night. Waking the third morning at daybreak, I saw him through the window galloping past, and I knew he had spent the night on Black Mountain. I went to his room as soon as I got up, and Grayson was lying across his bed with his face down, his clothes on, and in his right hand was a revolver. I reeled into a chair before I had strength enough to bend over him, and when I did I found him asleep. I left him as he was, and I never let him know that I had been to his room; but I got him out on the rock again that night, and I turned our talk again to suicide. I said it was small, mean, cowardly, criminal, contemptible! I was savagely in earnest, and Grayson shivered and said not a word. I thought he was in better mind after that. We got to taking night rides again, and I stayed as closely to him as I could, for times got worse



## A PURPLE RHODODENDRON

and trouble was upon everybody. Notes fell thicker than snowflakes, and, through the foolish policy of the company, foreclosures had to be made. Grayson went to the wall like the rest of us. I asked him what he had done with the money he had made. He had given away a great deal to poorer kindred; he had paid his dead father's debts; he had played away a good deal, and he had lost the rest. His faith was still imperturbable. He had a dozen rectangles of "dirt," and from these, he said, it would all come back some day. Still, he felt the sudden poverty keenly, but he faced it as he did any other physical fact in life—dauntless. He used to be fond of saying that no one thing could make him miserable. But he would talk with mocking earnestness about some much-dreaded combination; and a favorite phrase of his—which got to have peculiar significance—was "the cohorts of hell," who closed in on him when he was sick and weak, and who fell back when he got well. He had one strange habit, too, from which I got comfort. He would deliberately walk into and defy any temptation that beset him. That was the way he strengthened himself, he said. I knew what his temptation was now, and I thought of this habit when I found him asleep with his revolver, and I got hope from it now, when the dreaded combination

## A PURPLE RHODODENDRON

(whatever that was) seemed actually to have come.

I could see now that he got worse daily. He stopped his mockeries, his occasional fits of reckless gayety. He stopped poker—resolutely—he couldn't afford to lose now; and, what puzzled me, he stopped drinking. The man simply looked tired, always hopelessly tired; and I could believe him sincere in all his foolish talk about his blessed Nirvana: which was the peace he craved, which was end enough for him.

Winter broke. May drew near; and one afternoon, when Grayson and I took our walk up through the Gap, he carried along a huge spy-glass of mine, which had belonged to a famous old desperado, who watched his enemies with it from the mountain-tops. We both helped capture him, and I defended him. He was sentenced to hang—the glass was my fee. We sat down opposite Bee Rock, and for the first time Grayson told me of that last scene with her. He spoke without bitterness, and he told me what she said, word for word, without a breath of blame for her. I do not believe that he judged her at all; she did not know—he always said; she did not *know*; and then, when I opened my lips, Grayson reached silently for my wrist, and I can feel again the warning crush of his fingers, and I say nothing against her now.

## A PURPLE RHODODENDRON

I asked Grayson what his answer was.

"I asked her," he said, solemnly, "if she had even seen a purple rhododendron."

I almost laughed, picturing the scene—the girl bewildered by his absurd question—Grayson calm, superbly courteous. It was a mental peculiarity of his—this irrelevancy—and it was like him to end a matter of life and death in just that way.

"I told her I should send her one. I am waiting for them to come out," he added; and he lay back with his head against a stone and sighted the telescope on a dizzy point, about which buzzards were circling.

"There is just one bush of rhododendron up there," he went on. "I saw it looking down from the Point last spring. I imagine it must blossom earlier than that across there on Bee Rock, being always in the sun. No, it's not budding yet," he added, with his eye to the glass. "You see that ledge just to the left? I dropped a big rock from the Point square on a rattler who was sunning himself there last spring. I can see a foothold all the way up the cliff. It can be done," he concluded, in a tone that made me turn sharply upon him.

"Do you really mean to climb up there?" I asked, harshly.

"If it blossoms first up there—I'll get it where

## A PURPLE RHODODENDRON

it blooms first." In a moment I was angry and half sick with suspicion, for I knew his obstinacy; and then began what I am half ashamed to tell.

Every day thereafter Grayson took that glass with him, and I went along to humor him. I watched Bee Rock, and he that one bush at the throat of the peak—neither of us talking over the matter again. It was uncanny, that rivalry—sun and wind in one spot, sun and wind in another—Nature herself casting the fate of a half-crazed fool with a flower. It was utterly absurd, but I got nervous over it—apprehensive, dismal.

A week later it rained for two days, and the water was high. The next day the sun shone, and that afternoon Grayson smiled, looking through the glass, and handed it to me. I knew what I should see. One purple cluster, full blown, was shaking in the wind. Grayson was leaning back in a dream when I let the glass down. A cool breath from the woods behind us brought the odor of roots and of black earth; up in the leaves and sunlight somewhere a wood-thrush was singing, and I saw in Grayson's face what I had not seen for a long time, and that was peace—the peace of stubborn purpose. He did not come for me the next day, nor the next; but the next he did, earlier than usual.

"I am going to get that rhododendron," he said. "I have been half-way up—it can be

## A PURPLE RHODODENDRON

reached." So had I been half-way up. With nerve and agility the flower could be got, and both these Grayson had. If he had wanted to climb up there and drop, he could have done it alone, and he would have known that I should have found him. Grayson was testing himself again, and, angry with him for the absurdity of the thing and with myself for humoring it, but still not sure of him, I picked up my hat and went. I swore to myself silently that it was the last time I should pay any heed to his whims. I believed this would be the last. The affair with the girl was over. The flower sent, I knew Grayson would never mention her name again.

Nature was radiant that afternoon. The mountains had the leafy luxuriance of June, and a rich, sunlit haze drowsed on them between the shadows starting out over the valley and the clouds so white that the blue of the sky looked dark. Two eagles shot across the mouth of the Gap as we neared it, and high beyond buzzards were sailing over Grayson's rhododendron.

I went up the ravine with him and I climbed up behind him—Grayson going very deliberately and whistling softly. He called down to me when he reached the shelf that looked half-way.

"You mustn't come any farther than this," he said. "Get out on that rock and I'll drop them down to you."



## A PURPLE RHODODENDRON

Then he jumped from the ledge and caught the body of a small tree close to the roots, and my heart sank at such recklessness and all my fears rose again. I scrambled hastily to the ledge, but I could get no farther. I might possibly make the jump he had made—but how should I ever get back? How would he? I called angrily after him now, and he wouldn't answer me. I called him a fool, a coward; I stamped the ledge like a child—but Grayson kept on, foot after hand, with stealthy caution, and the purple cluster nodding down at him made my head whirl. I had to lie down to keep from tumbling from the ledge; and there on my side, gripping a pine bush, I lay looking up at him. He was close to the flowers now, and just before he took the last upward step he turned and looked down that awful height with as calm a face as though he could have dropped and floated unhurt to the ravine beneath.

Then with his left hand he caught the ledge to the left, strained up, and, holding thus, reached out with his right. The hand closed about the cluster, and the twig was broken. Grayson gave a great shout then. He turned his head as though to drop them and, that far away, I heard the sibilant whir of rattles. I saw a snake's crest within a yard of his face, and, my God! I saw Grayson loose his left hand to



## A PURPLE RHODODENDRON

guard it! The snake struck at his arm, and Grayson reeled and caught back once at the ledge with his left hand. He caught once, I say, to do him full justice; then, without a word, he dropped—and I swear there was a smile on his face when he shot down past me into the trees.

I found him down there in the ravine with nearly every bone in his body crushed. His left arm was under him, and outstretched in his right hand was the shattered cluster, with every blossom gone but one. One white half of his face was unmarked, and on it was still the shadow of a smile. I think it meant more than that Grayson believed that he was near peace at last. It meant that Fate had done the deed for him and that he was glad. Whether he would have done it himself, I do not know; and that is why I say that though Grayson brought the flower down—smiling from peak to ravine—I do not know that he was not, after all, a coward.

That night I wrote to the woman in Kentucky. I told her that Grayson had fallen from a cliff while climbing for flowers; and that he was dead. Along with these words, I sent a purple rhododendron.

IN HAPPY VALLEY

TO  
HOPE  
LITTLE DAUGHTER  
OF  
RICHARD HARDING DAVIS

## THE COURTSHIP OF ALLAPHAIR

PREACHING at the open-air meeting-house was just over and the citizens of Happy Valley were pouring out of the benched enclosure within living walls of rhododendron. Men, women, children, babes in arms mounted horse or mule or strolled in family groups homeward up or down the dusty road. Youths and maids paired off, dallying behind. Emerged last one rich, dark, buxom girl alone. Twenty yards down the road two young mountaineers were squatted in the shade whittling, and to one she nodded. The other was a stranger—one Jay Dawn—and the stare he gave her was not only bold but impudent.

“Who’s goin’ home with *that* gal?” she heard him ask.

“Nobody,” was the answer; “*that* gal al’ays goes home *alone*.” She heard his snort of incredulity.

“Well, I’m goin’ with her right now.” The other man caught his arm.

“No, you ain’t”—and she heard no more.

Athwart the wooded spur she strode like a

## THE COURTSHIP OF ALLAPHAIR

man. Her full cheeks and lips were red and her black, straight hair showed Indian blood, of which she was not ashamed. On top of the spur a lank youth with yellow hair stood in the path.

“How-dye, Allaphair!” he called uneasily, while she was yet some yards away.

“How-dye!” she said unsmiling and striding on toward him with level eyes.

“Allaphair,” he pleaded quickly, “lemme——”

“Git out o’ my way, Jim Spurgill.” The boy stepped quickly from the path and she swept past him.

“Allaphair, lemme walk home with ye.” The girl neither answered nor turned her head, though she heard his footsteps behind her.

“Allaphair, uh, Allaphair, please lemme——” He broke off abruptly and sprang behind a tree, for Allaphair’s ungentle ways were widely known. The girl had stooped for a stone and was wheeling with it in her hand. Gingerly the boy poked his head out from behind the tree, prepared to dodge.

“You’re wuss’n a she-wolf in sucklin’ time,” he grumbled, and the girl did not seem displeased. Indeed, there was a grim smile on her scarlet lips when she dropped the stone and stalked on. It was almost an hour before she

## THE COURTSHIP OF ALLAPHAIR

crossed a foot-log and took the level sandy curve about a little bluff, whence she could see the two-roomed log cabin that was home. There were flowers in the little yard and morning-glories covered the small porch, for, boyish as she was, she loved flowers and growing things. A shrill cry of welcome greeted her at the gate, and she swept the baby sister toddling toward her high above her head, fondled her in her arms, and stopped on the threshold. Within was another man, slight and pale and a stranger.

“This is the new school-teacher, Allaphair,” said her mother. “He calls hisself Iry Combs.”

“How-dye!” said the girl, but the slight man rose and came forward to shake hands. She flashed a frown at her mother a moment later, behind the stranger’s back; teachers boarded around and he might be there for a week and perhaps more. The teacher was mountain born and bred, but he had been to the Bluegrass to school, and he had brought back certain little niceties of dress, bearing, and speech that irritated the girl. He ate slowly and little, for he had what he called indigestion, whatever that was. Distinctly he was shy, and his only vague appeal to her was in his eyes, which were big, dark, and lonely.

It was a disgrace for Allaphair to have reached her years of one-and-twenty without marrying,



## THE COURTSHIP OF ALLAPHAIR

and the disgrace was just then her mother's favorite theme. Feeling rather poorly, the old woman began on it that afternoon. Allaphair had gone out to the woodpile and was picking up an armful of fire-wood, and the mother had followed her. Said Allaphair:

"I tell you agin an' agin I hain't got no use fer 'em—a-totin' guns an' knives an' a-drinkin' moonshine an' fightin' an' breakin' up meetin's an' lazin' aroun' ginerally. An' when they ain't that way," she added contemptuously, "they're like that un thar. Look at him!" She broke into a loud laugh. Ira Combs had volunteered to milk, and the old cow had just kicked him over in the mud. He rose red with shame and anger—she felt more than she saw the flash of his eyes—and valiantly and silently he went back to his task. Somehow the girl felt a pang of pity for him, for already she saw in his eyes the telltale look that she knew so well in the eyes of men. With his kind it would go hard; and right she was to the detail.

She herself went to St. Hilda to work and learn, but one morning she passed his little schoolhouse just as he was opening for the day. From a gable the flag of her country waved, and she stopped mystified. And then from the green, narrow little valley floated up to her wondering ears a song. Abruptly it broke off

## THE COURTSHIP OF ALLAPHAIR

and started again; he was teaching the children the song of her own land, which she and they had never heard before. It was almost sunset when she came back and the teacher was starting for home. He was ahead of her—she knew he had seen her coming—but he did not wait for her, nor did he look back while she was following him all the way home. And next Sunday he too went to church, and after meeting he started for home alone and she followed alone. He had never made any effort to speak to her alone, nor did he venture the courting pleasantries of other men. Only in his telltale eyes was his silent story plain, and she knew it better than if he had put it into words. In spite of her certainty, however, she was a little resentful that Sunday morning, for his slender figure climbed doggedly ahead, and suddenly she sat down that he might get entirely out of her sight.

She got down on her hands and knees to drink from the little rain-clear brook that tinkled across the road at the bottom of the hill, and all at once lifted her head like a wild thing. Some one was coming down the hill—coming at a dog-trot. A moment later her name was called, and it was the voice of a stranger. She knew it was Jay Dawn, for she had heard of him—had heard of his boast that he would keep company with her—and she kept swiftly on.

## THE COURTSHIP OF ALLAPHAIR

Again and again he called, but she paid no heed. She glared at him fiercely when he caught up with her—and stopped. He stopped. She walked on and he walked on. He caught her by the arm when she stopped again, and she threw off his hold with a force that wheeled him half around, and started off on a run. She stooped when she next heard him close to her and whirled, with a stone in her hand.

“Go 'way!” she panted. “I'll brain ye!” He laughed, but he came no nearer.

“All right,” he said, as though giving up the chase, but when she turned the next spur there Jay was waiting for her by the side of the road.

“How-dye,” he grinned. Three times he cut across ledge and spur and gave her a grinning how-dye. The third time she was ready for him and she let fly. The first stone whistled past his head with astonishing speed. The second he dodged and the third caught him between the shoulders as he leaped for a tree with an oath and a yell. And there she left him, swearing horribly and frankly at her.

Jay Dawn did not go back to logging that week. Report was that he had gone to “courtin' an' throwin' rocks at woodpeckers.” Both statements were true, but Jay was courting at long range. He hung about her house a great deal. Going to mill, looking for her cow, to and

## THE COURTSHIP OF ALLAPHAIR

fro from the mission, Allaphair never failed to see Jay Dawn. He always spoke and he never got answer. He always grinned, but his eye was threatening. To the school-teacher he soon began to give special notice, for that was what Allaphair seemed to be doing herself. He saw them sitting in the porch together alone, going out to milk or to the woodpile. Passing her gate one flower-scented dusk, he heard the drone of their voices behind the morning-glory vines and heard her laugh quite humanly. He snorted his disgust, but once when he saw the girl walking home with the teacher from school he seethed with rage and bided his time for both. He did spend much time throwing at woodpeckers, ostensibly, but he was not practising for a rock duel with Allaphair. He had picked out the level stretch of sandy road not far from Allaphair's house, which was densely lined with rhododendron and laurel, and was carefully denuding it of stones. When any one came along he was playing David with the birds; a moment later he was "a-workin' the public road," but not to make the going easier for the none too dainty feet of Allaphair. Indeed, the girl twice saw him at his peculiar diversion, but all suspicion was submerged in scorn.

The following Sunday things happened. On the way from church the girl had come to the

## THE COURTSHIP OF ALLAPHAIR

level stretch of sand. Beyond the vine-clad bluff and "a whoop and a holler" further on was home. Midway of the stretch Jay Dawn stepped from the bushes and blocked her way, and with him were his grin and his threatening eye.

"I'm goin' to kiss ye," he said. Right, left, and behind she looked for a stone, and he laughed.

"Thar hain't a rock between that poplar back thar and that poplar thar at the bluff; the woodpeckers done got 'em all." There was no use to run—the girl knew she was trapped and her breast began to heave. Slowly he neared her, with one hand outstretched, as though he were going to halter a wild horse, but she did not give ground. When she slapped at his hand he caught her by one wrist, and then with lightning quickness by the other. Quickly she bent her head, caught one of his wrists with her teeth, and bit it to the bone, so that with an open cry of pain he threw her loose. Then she came at him with her fists like a man, and she fought like a man. Blow after blow she rained on him, and one on the chin made him stagger. He could not hit back, so he closed in, and then it was cavewoman and caveman. He expected her to bite again and scratch, but she did neither—nor did she cry for help. She



## THE COURTSHIP OF ALLAPHAIR

kept on like a man, and after one blow in his stomach which made him sick she grappled like a wrestler, which she was, and but for his own quickness would have thrown him over her left knee. Each was in the straining embrace of the other now, and her heaving breast was crushed against his, and for a moment he stood still.

“This suits me exactly,” he cackled, and that made her furious and turned her woman again. To keep her now from biting him he thrust his right forearm under her chin and bent her slowly backward. Her right fist beat his muscular back harmlessly—she caught him by the hair, but unmindful he bent her slowly on.

“I’ll have ye killed,” she said savagely—“I’ll have ye killed”; and then suddenly he felt her collapse, submissive, and his lips caught hers.

“Thar now,” he said, letting her loose; “you need a leetle tamin’, you do,” and he turned and walked slowly away. The girl dropped to the ground, weeping. But there was an exultant look in her eyes before she reached home.

The teacher was sitting in the porch.

“*He* never would ‘a’ done it,” she muttered, and she hardly spoke to him.

A message from Jay Dawn reached the school-teacher the morning after the “running of a



## THE COURTSHIP OF ALLAPHAIR

set" at the settlement school. Jay had infuriated Allaphair by his attentions to Polly Stidham from Quicksand. Allaphair had flirted outrageously with Ira Combs the teacher, and in turn Jay got angry, not at her but at the man. So he sent word that he would come down the next Saturday and knock "that mullet-headed, mealy-mouthed, spindle-shanked rat into the middle of next week," and drive him from the hills.

"Whut you goin' to do about it?" asked Allaphair, secretly thrilled. To her surprise the little man seemed neither worried nor frightened.

"Nothing," he said, adding the final *g* with irritating precision; "but I have never backed out of a fight in my life." Allaphair could hardly hold back a hoot of contempt.

"Why, he'll break you to pieces with his hands."

"Perhaps—if he gets hold of me." The girl almost shrieked.

"You hain't going to run?"

"I'm *not* going to run; it's no disgrace to get licked."

"But if he crows over ye atterwards—whut'll you do then?"

The teacher made no answer, nor did he answer Jay's message. He merely went his way, which was neither to avoid nor seek; so Jay

## THE COURTSHIP OF ALLAPHAIR

sought him. Allaphair saw him the next Friday afternoon, waiting by the roadside—waiting, no doubt, for Ira Combs. Her first impulse was to cross over the spur and warn the teacher, but curiosity as to just what the little man would do got the better of her, and she slipped aside into the bushes and crept noiselessly to a spot whence she could peer out and see and hear all that might happen. Soon she saw the school-teacher coming, as was his wont, leisurely, looking at the ground at his feet and with his hands clasped behind his back. He did not see the threatening figure waiting until Jay rose.

“Stop thar, little Iry,” he sneered, and he whipped out his revolver and fired. The girl nearly screamed, but the bullet cut into the dust near Ira’s right foot.

“Yuh danced purty well t’other night, an’ I want to see ye dance some more by yo’self. Git at it!” He raised his gun again and the school-teacher raised one hand. He had grown very red and as suddenly very pale, but he did not look frightened.

“You can kill me,” he drawled quietly, “but I’m not going to dance for you. Suppose you whoop me instead—I heard that was your intention.” Jay laughed.

“Air ye goin’ to fight me?” he asked incredulously.

## THE COURTSHIP OF ALLAPHAIR

“ I’d rather be licked than dance.”

“ All right,” said Jay. “ I’ll lam’ ye aroun’ a little an’ spank ye good an’ mebbe make ye dance atterwards.” He unbuckled his pistol and tossed it into the grass by the roadside.

“ Will you fight fair ? ” asked Ira, still formal in speech. “ No wrestling, biting, or gouging.”

“ No wrasslin’, no bitin’, no gougin’,” mimicked Jay, beginning to revolve his huge fists around each other in country fashion. The little man waited, his left arm outstretched and bent and his right across and close to his chest, and the watching girl almost groaned. Still his white, calm face, his steady eyes, and his lithe poise fascinated her. She would not let Jay hurt him badly—she would come out and take a hand herself. Jay opened one fist, and with his open hand made a powerful, contemptuous sweep at Ira’s head, and the girl expected to see the little teacher fly off into the bushes and the fight over. To her amazement Ira gave no ground at all. His feet never moved, but like a blacksnake’s head his own darted back; Jay’s great hand fanned the air, and as his own force whirled him half around, Allaphair had to hold back a screech of laughter, for Ira had *slapped him*. Jay looked puzzled, but with fists clinched, he rushed fiercely. Right and left he swung, but the teacher was never there. Presently there

## THE COURTSHIP OF ALLAPHAIR

was another stinging smack on his cheek and another, as Ira danced about him like the shadow of a magic lantern.

“He’s a-tirin’ him down,” thought Allaphair, but she was wrong; Ira was trying to make him mad, and that did not take much time or trouble. Jay rushed him.

“No wrasslin’,” called Ira quietly, at the same time stopping the rush with a left-hand swing on Jay’s chin that made the head wobble.

“I reckon he must be left-handed,” thought the wondering Allaphair. There are persons who literally do grind their teeth with rage and it is audible. The girl heard Jay’s now.

“He’s goin’ to kill him,” she thought, and she got ready to do her part, for with a terrible, hoarse grunt Jay had rushed. Like a greased rod of steel the boy writhed loose from the big, crooked talons that reached for his throat, and his right fist, knobbed on the end of another bar of steel, came up under Jay’s bent head with every ounce of the whole weight behind it in the blow. It caught the big man on the point of the chin. Jay’s head snapped up and back violently, his feet left the ground, and his big body thudded the road.

“My God, he’s knocked him down! My God, he’s knocked him down!” muttered the amazed girl. “You got him down!” she cried.

## THE COURTSHIP OF ALLAPHAIR

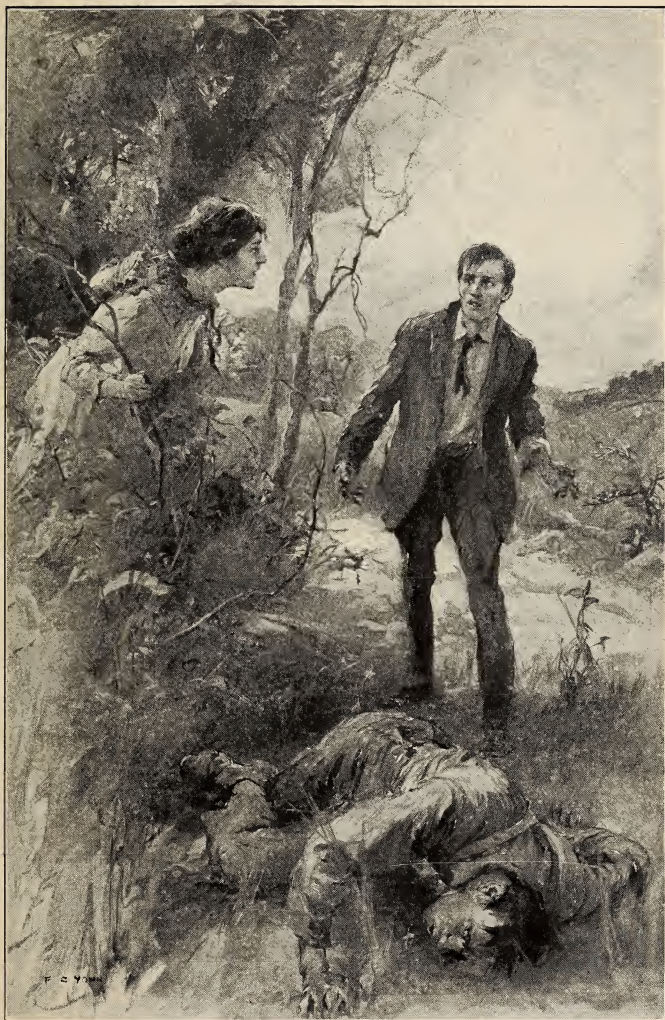
“Jump on him an’ stomp him!” He turned one startled look toward her and—it is incredible—the look even at that moment was shy; but he stood still, for Ira had picked up the ethics as well as the skill of the art, of which nothing was known in Happy Valley or elsewhere in the hills. So he stood still, his hands open, and waited. For a while Jay did not move, and his eyes, when they did open, looked dazed. He rose slowly, and as things came back to him his face became suddenly distorted. Nothing alive could humiliate him that way and still live; he meant to kill now.

“Look out!” screamed the girl. Jay rushed for the gun and Ira darted after him; but there was a quicker flash from the bushes, and Jay found his own gun pointed at his own breast and behind it Allaphair’s black eyes searing him.

“Huh!” she grunted contemptuously, and the silence was absolute while she broke the pistol, emptied the cartridges into her hand, and threw them far over into the bushes.

“Less go on home, Iry,” she said, and a few steps away she turned and tossed the gun at Jay’s feet. He stooped, picked it up, and, twirling it in his hand, looked foolishly after them. Presently he grinned, for at bottom Jay was a man. And two hours later, amid much won-





“You got him down!” she cried. “Jump on him an’ stomp him!”





## THE COURTSHIP OF ALLAPHAIR

der and many guffaws, he was telling the tale:

“The damned leetle spindle-shank licked me—licked *me!* An’ I’ll back him agin anybody in Happy Valley or anywhar else—ef you leave out bitin’, gougin’, and wrasslin’.”

“Did ye lose yo’ gal, too?” asked Pleasant Trouble.

“Huh!” said Jay, “I reckon *not*—she knows *her* boss.”

The two walked home slowly and in silence—Ira in front and Allaphair, as does the woman in the hills, following close behind, in a spirit quite foreign to her hitherto. The little school-teacher had turned shy again and said never a word, but, as he opened the gate to let her pass through, she saw the old, old, telltale look in his sombre eyes. Her mother was crooning in the porch.

“No ploughin’ termorrer, mammy. Me an’ Iry want the ole nag to go down to the Couht House in the mornin’. Iry’s axed me to marry him.”

Perhaps every woman does not love a master—perhaps Allaphair had found hers.

## THE COMPACT OF CHRISTOPHER

**T**HE boy had come home for Sunday and must go back now to the Mission school. He picked up his battered hat and there was no good-by.

“I reckon I better be goin’,” he said, and out he walked. The mother barely raised her eyes, but after he was gone she rose and from the low doorway looked after his sturdy figure trudging up the road. His whistle, as clear as the call of a quail, filled her ears for a while and then was buried beyond the hill. A smaller lad clutched her black skirt, whimpering:

“Wisht I c’d go to the Mission school.”

“Thar hain’t room,” she said shortly. “The teacher says thar hain’t room. I wish to God thar was.”

Still whistling, the boy trudged on. Now and then he would lift his shrill voice and the snatch of an old hymn or a folk-song would float through the forest and echo among the crags above him. It was a good three hours’ walk whither he was bound, but in less than

## THE COMPACT OF CHRISTOPHER

an hour he stopped where a brook tumbled noisily from a steep ravine and across the road—stopped and looked up the thick shadows whence it came. Hesitant, he stood on one foot and then on the other, with a wary look down the road and up the ravine.

“I said I’d *try* to git back,” he said aloud. “I said I’d *try*.”

And with this self-excusing sophistry he darted up the brook. The banks were steep and thickly meshed with rhododendron, from which hemlock shot like black arrows upward, but the boy threaded through them like a snake. His breast was hardly heaving when he reached a small plateau hundreds of feet above the road, where two branches of the stream met from narrower ravines right and left. To the right he climbed, not up the bed of the stream, but to the top of a little spur, along which he went slowly and noiselessly, stooping low. A little farther on he dropped on his knees and crawled to the edge of a cliff, where he lay flat on his belly and peeked over. Below him one Jeb Mullins, a stooping, gray old man, was stirring something in a great brass kettle. A tin cup was going the round of three men squatting near. On a log two men were playing with greasy cards, and near them another lay in drunken sleep. The boy grinned, slid down

## THE COMPACT OF CHRISTOPHER

through the bushes, and, deepening his voice all he could, shouted:

“Throw up yo’ hands!”

The old man flattened behind the big kettle with his pistol out. One of the four men leaped for a tree—the others shot up their hands. The card-players rolled over the bank near them, with no thought of where they would land, and the drunken man slept on. The boy laughed loudly.

“Don’t shoot!” he cried, and he came through the bushes jeering. The men at the still dropped their hands and looked sheepish and then angry, as did the card-players, whose faces reappeared over the edge of the bank. But the old man and the young one behind the tree, who alone had got ready to fight, joined in with the boy, and the others had to look sheepish again.

“Come on, Chris!” said the old moonshiner, dipping the cup into the white liquor and handing it forth full. “Hit’s on me.”

Christmas is “new Christmas” in Happy Valley. The women give scant heed to it, and to the men it means “a jug of liquor, a pistol in each hand, and a galloping nag.” There had been target-shooting at Uncle Jerry’s mill to see who should drink old Jeb Mullins’s moon-

## THE COMPACT OF CHRISTOPHER

shine and who should smell, and so good was the marksmanship that nobody went without his dram. The carousing, dancing, and fighting were about all over, and now, twelve days later, it was the dawn of "old Christmas," and St. Hilda sat on the porch of her Mission school alone. The old folks of Happy Valley pay puritan heed to "old Christmas." They eat cold food and preserve a solemn demeanor on that day, and they have the pretty legend that at midnight the elders bloom and the beasts of the field and the cattle in the barn kneel, lowing and moaning. The sun was just rising and the day was mild, for a curious warm spell, not uncommon in the hills, had come to Happy Valley. Already singing little workers were "toting rocks" from St. Hilda's garden, cornfield, and vineyard, for it was Monday, and every Monday they gathered—boys and girls—from creek and hillside, to help her as volunteers. Far up the road she heard among them taunting laughter and jeers, and she rose quickly. A loud oath shocked the air, and she saw a boy chasing one of the workers up the vineyard hill. She saw the pursuer raise his hand and fall, just as he was about to hurl a stone. Then there were more laughter and jeers, and the fallen boy picked himself up heavily and started down the road toward



## THE COMPACT OF CHRISTOPHER

her—staggering. On he came staggering, and when he stood swaying before her there was no shocked horror in her face—only pity and sorrow.

“Oh, Chris, Chris!” she said sadly. The boy neither spoke nor lifted his eyes, and she led him up-stairs and put him to bed. All day he slept in a stupor, and it was near sunset when he came down, pale, shamed, and silent. There were several children in the porch.

“Come, Chris!” St. Hilda said, and he followed her down to the edge of the creek, where she sat down on a log and he stood with hanging head before her.

“Chris,” she said, “we’ll have a plain talk now. This is the fourth time you’ve been”—the word came with difficulty—“drunk.”

“Yes’m.”

“I’ve sent you away three times, and three times I’ve let you come back. I let you come back after new Christmas, only twelve days ago.”

“Yes’m.”

“You can’t keep your word.”

“No’m.”

“I don’t know what to do now, so I’m going to ask you.”

She paused and Chris was silent, but he was thinking, and she waited. Presently he looked straight into her eyes, still silent.

## THE COMPACT OF CHRISTOPHER

“What do *you* think I’d better do?” she insisted.

“I reckon you got to whoop me, Miss Hildy.”

“But you know I can’t whip you, Chris. I never whip anybody.”

Several times a child had offered to whip himself, had done so, and she wondered whether the boy would propose that, but he repeated, obstinately and hopelessly:

“You got to whoop me.”

“I won’t—I can’t.” Then an idea came. “Your mother will have to whip you.”

Chris shook his head and was silent. He was not on good terms with his mother. It was a current belief that she had “put pizen in his daddy’s liquer.” She had then married a man younger than she was, and to the boy’s mind the absence of dignity in one case matched the crime in the other.

“All right,” he said at last; “but I reckon you better send somebody else atter her. You can’t trust me to git by that still”—he stopped with a half-uttered oath of surprise:

“Look thar!”

A woman was coming up the road. She wore a black cotton dress and a black sunbonnet—mourning relics for the dead husband which the living one had never had the means to supplant—and rough shoes. She pushed back the bonnet

## THE COMPACT OF CHRISTOPHER

with one nervous, bony hand, saw the two figures on the edge of the creek, and without any gesture or call came toward them. And only the woman's quickness in St. Hilda saw the tense anxiety of the mother's face relax. The boy saw nothing; he was only amazed.

"Why, mammy, whut the—whut are you doin' up hyeh?"

The mother did not answer, and St. Hilda saw that she did not want to answer. St. Hilda rose with a warm smile of welcome.

"So this is Chris's mother?"

The woman shook hands limply.

"Hit's whut I passes fer," she said, and she meant neither smartness nor humor. The boy was looking wonderingly, almost suspiciously at her, and she saw she must give him some explanation.

"I been wantin' to see the school hyeh an' Miss Hildy. I had to come up to see Aunt Sue Morrow, who's might' nigh gone, so I jes kep' a-walkin' on up hyeh."

"Miss Hildy hyeh," said the boy, "was jes about to send fer ye."

"To sen' fer *me*?"

"I been drunk agin."

The mother showed no surprise or displeasure.

"Hit's the fourth time since sorghum time,"

## THE COMPACT OF CHRISTOPHER

the boy went on relentlessly. "I axed Miss Hildy hyeh to whoop me, but she says she don't nuver whoop nobody, so she was jes a-goin' to send fer you to come an' whoop me when you come a-walkin' up the road."

This was all, and the lad pulled out an old Barlow knife and went to a hickory sapling. The two women watched him silently as he cut off a stout switch and calmly began to trim it. At last the woman turned to the teacher and her voice trembled.

"I don't see Chris thar more'n once or twice a year, an' seems kind o' hard that I got to whoop him."

The boy turned sharply, and helplessly she took the switch.

"And hit hain't his fault nohow. His step-daddy got him drunk. He tol' me so when he come home. I went by the still to find Chris an' cuss out ole Jeb Mullins an' the men thar. An' I come on hyeh."

"Set down a minute, mammy," said Chris, dropping on the log on one side of St. Hilda, and obediently the mother sat down on the other side.

"Mammy," he said abruptly, "I'll stop drinkin' if you will."

St. Hilda almost gasped. The woman lifted her eyes to the mountainside and dropped her

## THE COMPACT OF CHRISTOPHER

gaze presently to her hands, which were twisting the switch in her lap.

“ I’ll stop if you will,” he repeated.

“ I’ll try, Chris,” she said, but she did not look up.

“ Gimme yo’ hand.”

Across St. Hilda’s lap she stretched one shaking hand, which the boy clasped.

“ Put yo’ hand on thar, too, Miss Hildy,” he said, and when he felt the pressure of her big, strong, white hand for a moment he got up quickly and turned his face.

“ All right, mammy.”

St. Hilda rose, too, and started for the house—her eyes so blurred that she could hardly see the path. Midway she wheeled.

“ Don’t ! ” she cried.

The mother was already on her way home, breaking the switch to pieces and hiding her face within the black sunbonnet. The boy was staring after her.

## THE LORD'S OWN LEVEL

THE blacksmith-shop sat huddled by the roadside at the mouth of Wolf Run—a hut of blackened boards. The roof-tree sagged from each gable down to the crazy chimney in the centre, and the smoke curled up between the clapboard shingles or, as the wind listed, out through the cracks of any wall. It was a bird-singing, light-flashing morning in spring, and Lum Chapman did things that would have set all Happy Valley to wondering. A bare-headed, yellow-haired girl rode down Wolf Run on an old nag. She was perched on a sack of corn, and she gave Lum a shy “how-dye” when she saw him through the wide door. Lum’s great forearm eased, the bellows flattened with a long, slow wheeze, and he went to the door and looked after her. Professionally he noted that one hind shoe of the old nag was loose and that the other was gone. Then he went back to his work. It would not be a busy day with Uncle Jerry at the mill—there would not be more than one or two ahead of her and



## THE LORD'S OWN LEVEL

her meal would soon be ground. Several times he quit work to go to the door and look down the road, and finally he saw her coming. Again she gave him a shy "how-dye," and his eyes followed her up Wolf Run until she was out of sight.

The miracle these simple acts would have been to others was none to him. He was hardly self-conscious, much less analytical, and he went back to his work again.

A little way up that creek Lum himself lived in a log cabin, and he lived alone. This in itself was as rare as a miracle in the hills, and the reason, while clear, was still a mystery: Lum had never been known to look twice at the same woman. He was big, kind, taciturn, ox-eyed, calm. He was so good-natured that anybody could banter him, but nobody ever carried it too far except a bully from an adjoining county one court day. Lum picked him up bodily and dashed him to the ground so that blood gushed from his nose and he lay there bewildered, white, and still. Lum rarely went to church, and he never talked religion, politics, or neighborhood gossip. He was really thought to be quite stupid, in spite of the fact that he could make lightning calculations about crops, hogs, and cattle in his head. However, one man knew better, but he was a "furriner," a geologist, a

## THE LORD'S OWN LEVEL

“rock-pecker” from the Bluegrass. To him Lum betrayed an uncanny eye in discovering coal signs and tracing them to their hidden beds, and wide and valuable knowledge of the same. Once the foreigner lost his barometer just when he was trying to locate a coal vein on the side of the mountain opposite. Two days later Lum pointed to a ravine across the valley.

“You’ll find that coal not fer from the bcttom o’ that big poplar over thar.” The geologist stared, but he went across and found the coal and came back mystified.

“How’d you do it?”

Lum led him up Wolf Run. Where the vein showed by the creek-side Lum had built a little dam, and when the water ran even with the mud-covered stones he had turned the stream aside. The geologist lay down, sighted across the surface of the water, and his eye caught the base of the big poplar.

“Hit’s the Lord’s own level,” said Lum, and back he went to his work, the man looking after him and muttering:

“The Lord’s own level.”

Hardly knowing it, Lum waited for grinding day. There was the same exchange of “how-dyes” between him and the girl, going and coming, and Lum noted that the remaining hind shoe was gone from the old nag and that

## THE LORD'S OWN LEVEL

one of the front ones was going. This too was gone the next time she passed, and for the first time Lum spoke:

“Yo’ hoss needs shoein’.”

“She ain’t wuth it,” said the girl. Two hours later, when the girl came back, Lum took up the conversation again.

“Oh, yes, she is,” he drawled, and the girl slid from her sack of meal and watched him, which she could do fearlessly, for Lum never looked at her. He had never asked her name and he did not ask her now.

“I’m Jeb Mullins’s gal,” she said. “Pap’ll be comin’ ’long hyeh some day an’ pay ye.”

“My name’s Lum—Lum Chapman.”

“They calls me Marthy.”

He lifted her bag to the horse’s bony withers with one hand, but he did not offer to help her mount. He watched her again as she rode away, and when she looked back he turned with a queer feeling into his shop. Two days later Jeb Mullins came by.

“Whad’ I owe ye?” he asked.

“Nothin’,” said Lum gruffly.

The next day the old man brought down a broken plough on his shoulder, and to the same question he got the same answer:

“Nothin’.” So he went back and teased Martha, who blushed when she next passed the

## THE LORD'S OWN LEVEL

door of the shop, and this time Lum did not go out to watch her down the road.

Sunday following, Parson Small, the circuit-rider, preached in the open-air "meetin'-house," that had the sky for a roof and blossoming rhododendron for walls, and—wonder of wonders—Lum Chapman was there. In the rear he sat, and everybody turned to look at Lum. So simple was he that the reason of his presence was soon plain, for he could no more keep his eyes from the back of Martha Mullins's yellow head than a needle could keep its point from the North Pole. The circuit-rider on his next circuit would preach the funeral services of Uncle Billy Hall, who had been dead ten years, and Uncle Billy would be draped with all the virtues that so few men have when alive and that so few lack when dead. He would marry such couples as might to marriage be inclined. There were peculiar customs in Happy Valley, due to the "rider's" long absences, so that sometimes a baby might without shame be present at the wedding of its own parents. To be sure, Lum's eyes did swerve once when the preacher spoke of marriage—swerved from where the women sat to where sat the men—to young Jake Kilburn, called Devil Jake, a name of which he was rather proud; for Martha's eyes had swerved to him too, and Jake shot

## THE LORD'S OWN LEVEL

back a killing glance and began twisting his black mustache.

And then the preacher told about the woman whom folks once stoned.

Lum listened dully and waited helplessly around at the end of the meeting until he saw Martha and Jake go down the road together, Martha shy and conscious and Jake the conquering daredevil that he was known to be among women. Lum went back to his cabin, cooked his dinner, and sat down in his doorway to whittle and dream.

Lum went to church no more. When Martha passed his shop, the same "how-dye" passed between them and no more. Twice the circuit-rider came and went and Martha and Devil Jake did not ask his services. A man who knew Jake's record in another county started a dark rumor which finally reached Lum and sent him after the daredevil. But Jake had fled and Lum followed him almost to the edge of the Bluegrass country, to find that Jake had a wife and child. He had meant to bring Jake back to his duty, but he merely beat him up, kicked him to one side of the road like a dog, and came back to his shop.

Old Jeb Mullins came by thereafter with the old nag and the sack of corn, and Lum went on doing little jobs for him for nothing, for Jeb



## THE LORD'S OWN LEVEL

was a skinflint, a moonshiner, and a mean old man. He did not turn Martha out of his hut, because he was callous and because he needed her to cook and to save him work in the garden and corn-field. Martha stayed closely at home, but she was treated so kindly by some of the neighbors that once she ventured to go to church. Then she knew from the glances, whispers, and gigglings of the other girls just where she stood, and she was not seen again very far from her own door. It was a long time before Lum saw her again, so long, indeed, that when at last he saw her coming down Wolf Run on a sack of corn she carried a baby in her arms. She did not look up as she approached, and when she passed she turned her head and did not speak to him. So Lum sat where he was and waited for her to come back, and she knew he had been waiting as soon as she saw him. She felt him staring at her even when she turned her head, and she did not look up until the old nag stopped. Lum was barring the way.

“Yo’ hoss needs shoein’,” he said gravely, and from her lap he took the baby unafraid. Indeed, the child dimpled and smiled at him, and the little arm around his neck gave him a curious shiver that ran up the back of his head and down his spine. The shoeing was quickly



## THE LORD'S OWN LEVEL

done, and in absolute silence, but when they started up Wolf Run Lum went with them.

"Come by my shack a minit," he said.

The girl said nothing; that in itself would be another scandal, of course, but what was the difference what folks might say? At his cabin he reached up and lifted mother and child from the old nag, and the girl's hair brushed his cheek.

"You stay hyeh with the baby," he said quietly, "an' I'll take yo' meal home." She looked at him with mingled trust and despair. What was the difference?

It was near sundown when Lum got back. Smoke was coming out of his rickety chimney, and the wail of an old ballad reached his ears. Singing, the girl did not hear him coming, and through the open door he saw that the room had been tidied up and that she was cooking supper. The baby was playing on the floor. She turned at the creak of his footstep on the threshold and for the first time she spoke.

"Supper'll be ready in a minit."

A few minutes later he was seated at the table alone and the girl, with the baby on one arm, was waiting on him. By and by he pushed back his chair, pulled out his pipe, and sat down in the doorway. Dusk was coming. In the shadowy depths below a wood-thrush was



“You stay hyeh with the baby,” he said quietly, “an’ I’ll  
take yo’ meal home.” [Page 61.]



## THE LORD'S OWN LEVEL

fluting his last notes for that day. Then for the first time each called the other by name.

“Marthy, the circuit-rider’ll be ’roun’ two weeks from next Sunday.”

“All right, Lum.”

## THE MARQUISE OF QUEENSBERRY

**T**HUS it had happened. Pleasant Trouble was drunk one day and a fly lit on his knee. He whipped his forty-four from its holster.

“I’ll show ye who *you* air lightin’ on!” he swore, and blazed away. Of course he killed the fly, but incidentally he shattered its lighting-place. Had he been in a trench anywhere in France, his leg would have been saved, but he was away out in the Kentucky hills. If he minded the loss of it, however, no one could see, for with chin up and steady, daredevil eyes he swung along about as well on his crutch as if it had been a good leg. Down the road, close to the river’s brim, he was swinging now—his voice lifted in song. Ahead of him and just around the curve of the road, with the sun of Happy Valley raining its last gold on her golden bare head, walked the Marquise; but neither Pleasant nor she herself knew she was the Marquise. A few minutes later the girl heard the crunch of the crutch in the sandy road behind her, and she turned with a smile:

“How-dye, Pleaz!” The man caught the flapping brim of his slouch-hat and lifted it—



## THE MARQUISE OF QUEENSBERRY

an act of courtesy that he had learned only after Happy Valley was blessed by the advent of the Mission school: making it, he was always embarrassed no little.

“How-dye, Miss Mary!”

“Going down to the dance?”

“No’m,” he said with vigorous severity, and then with unctuous virtue—“I hain’t nuver run a set or played a play in my life.”

The word “dance” is taboo among these Calvinists of the hills. They “run sets” and “play plays”—and these are against the sterner morals that prevail—but they do not *dance*. The Mission teacher smiled. This was a sidelight on the complex character of Pleasant Trouble that she had not known before, and she knew it had nothing to do with his absent leg. A hundred yards ahead of them a boy and a girl emerged from a ravine—young King Camp and Polly Sizemore—and plainly they were quarrelling. The girl’s head was high with indignation; the boy’s was low with anger, and now and then he would viciously dig the toe of his boot in the sand as he strode along. Pleasant grinned.

“I won’t holler to ’em,” he said; “I reckon they’d ruther be alone.”

“Pleasant,” said Miss Mary, “you drink moonshine, don’t you?”



## THE MARQUISE OF QUEENSBERRY

“ Yes'm.”

“ You sometimes *make* it, don't you? ”

“ I've been s'picioned.”

“ You were turned out of church once, weren't you, for shooting up a meeting? ”

“ Yes,” was the indignant defense, “ but I proved to 'em that I was drunk, an' they tuk me back.” The girl had to laugh.

“ And yet you think dancing wrong? ”

“ Yes'm.”

The girl gave it up—so perfunctory and final was his reply. Indeed, he seemed to have lost interest. Twice he had looked back, and now he turned again. She saw the fulfilment of some prophecy in his face as he grunted and frowned.

“ Thar comes Ham Cage,” he said. Turning, the girl saw an awkward youth stepping into the road from the same ravine whence Polly and young King had come, but she did not, as did Pleasant, see Ham shifting a revolver from his hip to an inside pocket.

“ Those two boys worry the life out of me,” she said, and again Pleasant grunted. They were the two biggest boys in the school, and in running, jumping, lifting weights, shooting at marks, and even in working—in everything, indeed, except in books—they were tireless rivals. And now they were bitter contest-

## THE MARQUISE OF QUEENSBERRY

ants for the favor of Polly Sizemore—a fact that Pleasant knew better than the Mission girl.

Flirts are rare in the hills. “If two boys meets at the same house,” Pleasant once had told her, “they jes makes the gal say which one she likes best, and t’other one gits!” But with the growth of the Mission school had come a certain tolerance which Polly had used to the limit. Indeed, St. Hilda had discovered a queer reason for a sudden quickening of interest on Polly’s part in her studies. Polly had to have the letters she got read for her, and the letters she sent written for her, and thus St. Hilda found that at least three young men, who had gone into the army and had learned to write, thought—each of them—that he was first in her heart. Polly now wanted to learn to read and write so that she could keep such secrets to herself. She had been “settin’ up” with Ham Cage for a long time, and now she was “talkin’ to” young King Camp. King was taking her to the dance, and it was plain to Pleasant that trouble was near. He looked worried.

“Well,” he said, “I reckon thar hain’t so much harm the way you school folks run sets because you don’t ’low drinkin’ or totin’ pistols, an’ you make ’em go home early. I heerd Miss

## THE MARQUISE OF QUEENSBERRY

Hildy is away—do you think you can manage the bad uns?”

“I think so,” smiled Miss Mary.

“Well, mebbe I will come around to-night.”

“Come right along now,” said the girl heartily, but Pleasant had left his own gun at home, so he shook his head and started up the mountain.

### II

Happy Valley was darkening now. The evening star shone white in the last rosy western flush, and already lanterns glowed on the porch of the “big house” where the dancing was to be. From high in the shadows a voice came down to the girl:

“I hain’t got a gun an’ I hain’t had a drink to-day. Hit’s a shame when Miss Hildy’s always a-tryin’ to give us a good time she has to *beg* us to behave.”

The young folks were gathering in. On the porch she saw Polly Sizemore in a chair and young King Camp slipping into the darkness on the other side of the house. A few minutes later Ham Cage strolled into sight, saw Polly, and sullenly dropped on the stone steps as far away from her as possible. The little teacher planned a course of action.

“Ham,” she said, as she passed, “I want

## THE MARQUISE OF QUEENSBERRY

you to run the first set with me." Ham stared and she was rather startled by his flush.

"Yes'm," he stammered. A moment later young King reappeared at the other end of the porch.

"King," she said, "I want you to run the second set with me," and King too stared, flushed, and stammered assent, while Polly flashed indignation at the little teacher's back. It had been Miss Mary's plan to break up the hill custom of one boy and one girl dancing together all the time—and she had another idea as well.

Pleasant Trouble swung into the circle of light from the porch just as the first set started, and he sat down on the stone steps to look on. It was a jolly dance. Some elderly folks were there to look on, and a few married couples who, in spite of Miss Mary's persuasions, yet refused to take part. It was soon plain that Polly Sizemore and the little teacher were the belles of the ball, though of the two Polly alone seemed to realize it. Pleasant could hardly keep his eyes off the Mission girl. She was light as a feather, her eyes sparkled, her cheeks grew rosy, her laugh rang out, and the flaming spirit of her was kindling fires of which she never dreamed. Pleasant saw her dance first with Ham and then with King, and he grinned with

## THE MARQUISE OF QUEENSBERRY

swift recognition of her purpose. And he grinned the more when he saw that she was succeeding beyond her realization—saw it by the rage in Polly's black eyes, which burned now at Ham and now at King, for Miss Mary had no further need to ask either of them to dance—one or the other was always at her side. Indeed the Marquise, without knowing it, was making a pretty triangular mess of things, and Pleasant chuckled unholily—chuckled until he saw things were getting serious, and then his inner laughing ceased and his sharp eyes got wary and watchful. For first Ham and then King would disappear in the darkness, and each time they came back their faces were more flushed and their dancing was more furious.

Now, Polly was winging arrows of anger at the little teacher, and presently Pleasant rose lightly and with incredible swiftness swung across the floor just as the climax came. From the other side Polly too darted forward. Ham and King were glaring at each other over the teacher's pretty head—each claiming the next dance. Miss Mary was opening her mouth for a mild rebuke when the two boys sprang back, the right hand of each flashing to his hip. King drew first, and Pleasant's crutch swished down on his wrist, striking his pistol to the floor. Polly had caught Ham's hand with both her



## THE MARQUISE OF QUEENSBERRY

own, and Ham felt the muzzle of Pleasant's forty-four against his stomach.

"Stop it!" said Pleasant sternly. "Miss Mary don't like sech doin's."

So quickly was it on and over that the teacher hardly realized that it had come on and was over. Her bewildered face paled, but the color came back with a rush, and when her indignant eyes began their deadly work Pleasant knew there was no further need of him, and he stepped back as though to escape penalty even for playing peacemaker in a way so rude.

"You—you—you two!" breathed Miss Mary helplessly, but only for a moment.

"Give me that gun, Ham. Pick that one up, King." Both she handed to Pleasant, and then—no torrent came. She turned with a wave of her hand.

"You can all go home now." There had been a moment of deadly quiet, but in the mountains even boys and girls do not take such events very seriously; the hubbub and tittering that had started again ceased again, and all left quickly and quietly—all but the teacher, Pleasant, and the two boys, for Polly too was moving away. King turned to go after her.

"Wait a moment, King," said Miss Mary, and Polly cried fiercely: "He can stay till



## THE MARQUISE OF QUEENSBERRY

doomsday fer all o' me. I hain't goin' with ary one uv 'em." And she flirted away.

"I am not going to talk to you two boys until to-morrow," said Miss Mary firmly, "and then I'm going to put a stop to all this. I want both of you to be here when school closes. I want you too, Pleasant, and I want you to bring Lum Chapman."

Pleasant Trouble was as bewildered as the two shamefaced boys—did she mean to have him hold a gun on the two boys while Lum, the blacksmith, whaled them?

"Me?—Lum?—why, whut——"

"Never mind—wait till to-morrow. Will you all be here?"

"Yes'm," said all.

"Go with them up the river, Pleasant. Don't let them quarrel, and see that each one goes up his own creek."

The two boys moved away like yoked oxen. At the bottom step Pleasant turned to look back. Very rigid and straight the little teacher stood under the lantern, and the pallor and distress of her face had given way to a look of stern determination.

"Whew!" he breathed, and he turned a half-circle on his crutch into the dark.

## THE MARQUISE OF QUEENSBERRY

### III

Miss Mary Holden was a daughter of the Old Dominion, on the other side of the Cumberland Range, and she came, of course, from fighting stock. She had gone North to school and had come home horrified by—to put it mildly—the Southern tendency to an occasional homicide. There had been a great change, to be sure, within her young lifetime. Except under circumstances that were peculiarly aggravating, gentlemen no longer peppered each other on sight. The duel was quite gone. Indeed, the last one at the old university was in her father's time, and had been, he told her, a fake. A Texan had challenged another student, and the seconds had loaded the pistols with blank cartridges. After firing three times at his enemy the Texan threw his weapon down, swore that he could hit a quarter every time at that distance, pulled forth two guns of his own and demanded that they be used; and they had a terrible time appeasing the Westerner, who, failing in humor, challenged then and there every member of his enemy's fraternity and every member of his own. Thereafter it became the custom there and at other institutions of learning in the State to settle all disputes fist and skull; and of this Miss Holden,

## THE MARQUISE OF QUEENSBERRY

who was no pacifist, thoroughly approved. Now she was in a community where the tendency to kill seemed well-nigh universal. St. Hilda was a gentle soul, who would never even whip a pupil. She might not approve—but Miss Holden had the spirit of the pioneer and she must lead these people into the light. So she told her plan next day to Pleasant Trouble and Lum Chapman, who were first to come. Stolid Lum would have shown no surprise had she proposed that the two boys dive from a cliff, and if one survived he won; but the wonder and the succeeding joy in Pleasant's face disturbed Miss Holden. And when Pleasant swung his hat from his head and let out a fox-hunting yelp of pure ecstasy she rebuked him severely, whereat the man with the crutch lapsed into solemnity.

“Will they fight this way?” she asked.

“Them two boys will fight a bee-gum o' sucklin' wildcats—tooth and toe-nail.”

“They aren't going to fight that way,” protested Miss Holden. “They will fight by the Marquis of—er Somebody's rules.” She explained the best she could the intervals of action and of rest, and her hearers were vastly interested.

“They can't kick?” asked Pleasant.

“No.”

## THE MARQUISE OF QUEENSBERRY

“ Ner bite ? ”

“ No ! ”

“ Ner gouge ? ”

“ What do you mean by ‘ gouge ’ ? ”

Pleasant pantomimed with a thumb-nail crooked on the outer edge of each eye-socket.

“ No ! ” was the horrified cry.

“ Jest a square, stand-up and knock-down fight ? ”

“ Yes, ” she said reluctantly but bravely.

“ Lum will be timekeeper and referee to make them break away when they clinch. ” When she explained that Pleasant scratched his head.

“ They can’t even *wrassle* ? ” Miss Holden understood and did not correct.

“ They can’t even *wrassle*. And you and I will be the seconds. ”

“ Seconds—whut do we do ? ”

“ Oh, we—we fan them and—and wash off the blood, ” she shivered a little in spite of herself. Pleasant smiled broadly.

“ Which one you goin’ to wash off ? ”

“ I—I don’t know. ” Pleasant grinned.

“ Well, we better toss up fer it an’ *atter they git hyeh*. ” She did not understand his emphasis.

“ Very well, ” she assented carelessly.

Up the road came Ham Cage now, and down the road came King Camp—both with a rapid

## THE MARQUISE OF QUEENSBERRY

stride. Though both had sworn to shoot on sight, they had kept away from each other as they had promised, and now without speaking they glowered unwinking into each other's eyes. Nor did either ask a question when the little teacher, with two towels over one arm, led the way down the road, up over a little ridge, and down to a grassy hollow by the side of a tinkling creek. It was hard for the girl to believe that these two boys meant to shoot each other as they had threatened, but Pleasant had told her they surely would, and that fact held her purpose firm. Without a word they listened while she explained, and without a word both nodded assent—nor did they show any surprise when the girl repeated what she had told Pleasant Trouble and Lum Chapman.

“Jes’ a plain ole square, stand-up an’ knock-down fight,” murmured Pleasant consolingly, pulling forth a silver quarter. “Heads—you wipe Ham; tails—you wipe King.” Miss Holden nodded, and for the first time the two lads turned their angry eyes from each other to the girl and yet neither asked a question. Tails it was, and the girl motioned King to a log on one side of the hollow, and Pleasant and Ham to another log on the other side. She handed Pleasant one of the towels, dropped her little watch into Lum’s huge palm, and on



## THE MARQUISE OF QUEENSBERRY

second thought took it back again: it might get broken, and Lum might be too busy to keep time. Only Pleasant saw the gritting of Ham's teeth when she took her stand by King's side.

"Take off your coats!" she said sharply. The two obeyed swiftly.

"Time!" she called, and the two leaped for each other.

"Stop!" she cried, and they halted. "I forgot—shake hands!"

Both shook their heads instead, like maddened bulls, and even Lum looked amazed; he even spoke:

"Whut's the use o' fightin', if they shakes hands?"

Miss Holden had no argument ready, and etiquette was waived. "Time!" she repeated, and then the two battering-rams, revolving their fists country-fashion, engaged. Half-forgotten Homeric phrases began to flit from a far-away schoolroom back into the little teacher's mind and she began to be consoled for the absence of gloves—those tough old ancients had used gauges of iron and steel. The two boys were evenly matched. After a few thundering body blows they grew wary, and when the round closed their faces were unmarked, they had done each other no damage, and Miss Holden was thrilled—it wasn't so bad



## THE MARQUISE OF QUEENSBERRY

after all. Each boy grabbed his own towel and wiped the sweat off his own face.

“Git at it, Ham—git at it!” encouraged Pleasant, and Ham got at it. He gave King a wallop on the jaw; King came back with a jolt on the chin, and the two embraced untenderly.

“Break away!” cried the girl. “Lum make them break!” Lum thrust one mighty arm between them and, as they flailed unavailingly over it, threw them both back with a right-and-left sweep. Both were panting when the girl called time, and the first blood showed streaming from King’s nose. Miss Holden looked a little pale, but gallantly she dipped the towel in the brook and went about her work. Again Pleasant saw his principal’s jaw work in a gritting movement, and he chuckled encouragement so loudly that the girl heard him and looked around indignantly. It was inevitable that the seconds, even unconsciously, should take sides, and that point was coming fast. The girl did not hear herself say:

“Shift your head and come back from underneath!” And that was what King proceeded to do, and Ham got an upper-cut on the chin that snapped his head up and sprinkled the blue sky with stars for him just as the bell of the girl’s voice sounded time. Meanwhile, up

## THE MARQUISE OF QUEENSBERRY

the road below them came a khaki-clad youth and a girl—Polly Sizemore and one of her soldier lovers who was just home on a furlough. Polly heard the noises in the hollow, cocked an ear, put her finger on her lips, and led him to the top of the little ridge whence she could peek over. Her amazed eyes grew hot seeing the Mission girl, and she turned and whispered:

“That fotted-on woman’s got ’em fightin’.”

The soldier’s face radiated joy indeed, and as unseen spectators the two noiselessly settled down.

“Whur’d they learn to fight this way?” whispered the soldier—the army had taught him. Polly whispered back:

“*She’s* a-larnin’ ’em.” The khaki boy gurgled his joy and craned his neck.

“Whut they fightin’ about?” Polly flushed and turned her face.

“I—er—I don’t know.” The soldier observed neither her flush nor her hesitation, for King and Ham were springing forward for another round; he only muttered his disgust at their awkwardness and their ignorance of the ring in terms that were strange to the girl by his side.

“The mutts, the cheeses, the pore dawgs—they don’t know how to guard an’ they ain’t got no lefts.”

## THE MARQUISE OF QUEENSBERRY

Pleasant was advising and encouraging his principal now openly and in a loud voice, and Ham's face began to twist with fury when he heard the Mission girl begin to spur on King. With bared teeth he rushed forward and through the wild blows aimed at him, got both underholds, and King gave a gasping grunt as the breath was squeezed quite out of him.

"Break!" cried the girl. Lum tugged at the locked hand and wrist behind King's back and King's hands flew to Ham's throat. "Break! Break!" And Lum had literally to tear them apart.

"Time!" gasped the girl. She was on the point of tears now, but she held them back and her mouth tightened—she would give them one more round anyhow. When the battling pair rose Pleasant lost his head. He let loose a fox-hunting yell. He forgot his duty and the rules; he forgot the girl—he forgot all but the fight.

"Let 'em loose!" he yelled. "Git at it, boys! Go fer him, Ham—whoop—ee—ee!" The girl was electrified. Lum began cracking the knuckles of his huge fingers. Polly and the soldier rose to their feet. That little dell turned eons back. The people there wore skins and two cavemen who had left their clubs at home fought with all the other weapons they had.



“Let ’em loose!” he yelled. “Git at it, boys! Go fer him,  
Ham—whoop-ee-ee!”





## THE MARQUISE OF QUEENSBERRY

The Mission girl could never afterward piece out the psychology of that moment of world darkness, but when she saw Ham's crooked thumbs close to King's eyes a weird and thrilling something swept her out of herself. Her watch dropped to the ground. She rushed forward, seized two handfuls of Ham's red hair, and felt Polly's two sinewy hands seizing hers. Like a tigress she flashed about; just in time then came the call of civilization, and she answered it with a joyous cry. Bounding across the creek below came a tall young man, who stopped suddenly in sheer amaze at the scene and as suddenly dashed on. With hair and eyes streaming, the girl went to meet him and rushed into his arms. From that haven she turned.

"It's a draw!" she said faintly. "Shake—" She did not finish the sentence. Ham and King had risen and were staring at her and the stranger. They looked at each other, and then saw Polly sidling back to the soldier. Again they looked at each other, grinned at each other, and, as each turned for his coat—clasped hands.

"Oh!" cried the girl, "I'm so glad."

"This is not my brother," she said, leading the stranger forward. If she expected to surprise them, she didn't, for in the hills brothers and sisters do not rush into each other's arms.



## THE MARQUISE OF QUEENSBERRY

“It’s my sweetheart, and he’s come to take me home. And you won’t shoot each other—you won’t fight any more?” And Ham said:

“Not jes’ at present”; and King laughed.

“I’m so glad.”

Pleasant swung back to the Mission House with the two foreigners, and on the way Miss Holden explained. The stranger was a merry person, and that part of Happy Valley rang with his laughter.

“My! I wish I had got there earlier—what were they fighting about?”

“Why, Polly Sizemore, that pretty girl with black hair who lost her head when—when—I caught hold of Ham.” The shoulder of Pleasant Trouble that was not working up and down over his crutch began to work up and down over something else.

“What’s the matter, Pleasant?” asked the girl.

“Nothin’.” But he was grinning when they reached the steps of the Mission, and he turned on Miss Holden a dancing eye.

“Polly nothin’—them two boys was a-fight-in’ about *you!*” And he left her aghast and wheeled chuckling away.

Next afternoon the Marquise bade her little brood a tearful good-by and rode with her

## THE MARQUISE OF QUEENSBERRY

lover up Happy Valley to go over the mountain, on to the railroad, and back into the world. At the mouth of Wolf Run Pleasant Trouble was waiting to shake hands.

"Tell Polly good-by for me, Pleasant," said Miss Holden. "She wasn't there."

"Polly and the soldier boy rid up to the Leetle Jedge o' Happy Valley last night to git married."

"Oh," said Miss Holden, and she flushed a little. "And Ham and King weren't there—where do you suppose they are?" Pleasant pointed to a green little hollow high up a ravine.

"They're up thar."

"Alone?" Pleasant nodded and Miss Holden looked anxious.

"They aren't fighting again?"

"Oh, no!"

"Do you suppose they are *really* friends now?"

"Ham an' King air as lovin' as a pair o' twins," said Pleasant decidedly, and Miss Holden looked much pleased.

"What on earth are they doing up there?"

"Well," drawled Pleasant, "when they ain't huggin' an' shakin' hands they're wrasslin' with a jug o' moonshine."

The Mission girl looked disturbed, and the merry stranger let loose his ringing laugh.

## THE MARQUISE OF QUEENSBERRY

“Oh, dear! Now, where do you suppose they got moonshine?”

“I tol’ you,” repeated Pleasant, “that I didn’t know nobody who couldn’t git moonshine.” Miss Holden sighed, her lover laughed again, and they rode away, Pleasant watching them till they were out of sight.

“Whut I aimed to say was,” corrected Pleasant mentally, “I didn’t know nobody who *knowed me* that couldn’t git it.” And he jingled the coins in his pockets that at daybreak that morning had been in the pockets of Ham and King.

## HIS LAST CHRISTMAS GIFT

THE sergeant got the wounded man to his feet and threw one arm around his waist. Then he all but carried him, stumbling along, with both hands clasped across his eyes, down the ravine that looked at night like some pit of hell. For along their path a thousand coke-ovens spat forth red tongues that licked northward with the wind, shot red arrows into the choking black smoke that surged up the mountainside, and lighted with fire the bellies of the clouds rolling overhead.

“Whar you takin’ me?”

“Hospital.” The mountaineer stopped suddenly.

“Why, I can’t see them ovens!”

“You come on, Jim.”

Next morning Jim lay on a cot with a sheet drawn to his chin and a grayish-yellow bandage covering forehead and eyes down to the tip of his nose. When the surgeon lifted that bandage the nurse turned her face aside, and what was under it, or rather what was not under it, shall not be told. Only out in the operating-room the smooth-faced young assist-

## HIS LAST CHRISTMAS GIFT

ant was curiously counting over some round leaden pellets, and he gave one low whistle when he pushed into a pile a full fourscore.

“He said he was a-lookin’ through a keyhole,” the sergeant reported, “an’ somebody let him have it with both barrels—but that don’t go. Jim wouldn’t be lookin’ through no keyhole; he’d bust the door down.”

Nor could the sergeant learn more. He had found the man stumbling down Possum Hollow, and up that hollow the men and women of the mining camp did not give one another away.

“It might ’a’ been any one of a dozen fellers I know,” the sergeant said, for Jim was a feudsman and had his enemies by the score.

The man on the cot said nothing. Once, to be sure, when he was crossing the border of Etherland, and once only, he muttered: “Yes, she come from Happy Valley, but she was a cat, no doubt about that. Yes, sir, the old girl was a cat.” But when he was conscious that much even he never would say again. He simply lay grim, quiet, uncomplaining, and not even the surgeon, whose step he got quickly to know, could get him to tell who had done the deed.

On the fourth day he showed some cheer.

“Look here, doc,” he said, “when you goin’



## HIS LAST CHRISTMAS GIFT

to take this rag off o' my eyes? I hain't seen a wink since I come in here."

"Oh, pretty soon," said the surgeon, and the nurse turned away again with drops in her eyes that would never be for the wounded man's eyes to shed again.

On the sixth day his pulse was fast and his blood was high—and that night the nurse knew precisely what meant the look in the surgeon's face when he motioned her to leave the room. Then he bent to lift the bandage once more.

"Why don't you take 'em all off, doc? I'd like to see the old girl again. Has she gone back to Happy Valley?"

"No—she's here."

"Won't she come to see me?"

"Yes, she'll come, but she can't now—she's sick abed." The man grinned.

"Yes, I know them spells."

"Jim," said the surgeon suddenly, "I'm going to be very busy to-morrow, and if you've got any message to send to anybody or anything to say to me, you'd better say it before I go." He spoke carelessly, but with a little too much care.

The sheet moved over the hands clasped across Jim's breast. "Why, doc, you don't mean to say—" He stopped and drew in one breath slowly.

## HIS LAST CHRISTMAS GIFT

“ Oh, no, but you can’t always tell, and I might not get back till late, and I thought you might have something to tell me about—” He paused helplessly, and the man on the cot began moving his lips. The surgeon bent low.

“ Why, doc,” he said very slowly, “ you—don’t—really—mean—to—say—that the old—” his voice dropped to a whisper, “ has finished me this time ? ”

“ Who finished you, Jim—who’d you say finished you ? ”

A curious smile flitted over the coarse lips and passed. Then the lips tightened and the thought behind the bandage made its way to the surgeon’s quick brain, and there was a long silence.

At last:

“ Doc, d’you ever hear tell of a woman bein’ hung ? ”

“ Yes, Jim.”

And then:

“ Doc, am I goin’ shore ? ” This question the surgeon answered with another, bending low.

“ Jim, what message shall I give your wife ? ” The curious smile came back.

“ Doc, this is Christmas, ain’t it ? ”

“ Yes, Jim.”

“ Doc, you’re shore, air ye, that nobody knows who done it ? ”

## HIS LAST CHRISTMAS GIFT

“Nobody but you, Jim.”

The man had been among men the terror of the hills for years, but on the last words that passed his gray lips his soul must have swung upward toward the soul of the Man who lived and died for the peace of those hills.

“Doc,” he said thickly, “you jus’ tell the old girl Jim says: ‘Happy Christmas!’”

The surgeon started back at the grim cheer of that message, but he took it like a priest and carried it back through the little hell that flared down the ravine on Jim now through the window. And like a priest he told it to but one living soul.

## THE ANGEL FROM VIPER

**H**E had violet eyes, the smile of a seraph, and a halo of yellow hair, and he came from Viper, which is a creek many, many hills away from Happy Valley. He came on foot and alone to St. Hilda, who said sadly that she had no room for him. But she sighed helplessly when the Angel smiled—and made room for him. To the teachers he became Willie—to his equals he was Bill. In a few weeks he got homesick and, without a word, disappeared. A fortnight later he turned up again with a little brother, and again he smiled at St. Hilda.

“Jeems Henery hyeh,” he said, “’lowed as how *he’d* come along”—and James Henry got a home. Jeems was eight, and the Angel, who was ten, was brother and father to him. He saw to it that Jeems Henery worked and worked hard and that he behaved himself, so that his concern for the dull, serious little chap touched St. Hilda deeply. That concern seemed, indeed, sacrificial—and was.

When spring breathed on the hills the Angel

## THE ANGEL FROM VIPER

got restless. He was homesick again and must go to see his mother.

"But, Willie," said St. Hilda, "you told me your mother died two years ago."

"She come *might' nigh* dyin'," said the Angel. "That's what I said." St. Hilda reasoned with him to no avail, and because she knew he would go anyhow gave him permission.

"Miss Hildy, I'm a-leavin' Jeems Henery with ye now, an' I reckon I oughter tell you somethin'."

"Yes, Willie," answered St. Hilda absently.

"Miss Hildy, Jeems Henery is the bigges' liar on Viper."

"Yes," repeated St. Hilda; "*what?*"

"The truth ain't in Jeems Henery," the Angel went on placidly. "You can't lam' it inter 'im an' tain't no use to try. You jus' watch him close while I'm gone."

"I will."

Half an hour later the Angel put his hand gently on St. Hilda's knee, and his violet eyes were troubled. "Miss Hildy," he said solemnly, "Jeems Henery is the cussin'est boy on Viper. I reckon Jeems Henery is the cussin'est boy in the world. You've got to watch him while I'm gone, or no tellin' whut he *will* larn them young uns o' yours."

"All right. I'll do the best I can."



## THE ANGEL FROM VIPER

“An’ that ain’t all,” added the Angel solemnly. “Jeems Henery”—St. Hilda almost held her breath—“Jeems Henery is the gamblin’est boy on Viper. Jeems Henery jes’ can’t *look* at a marble without tremblin’ all over. If you don’t watch him like a hawk while I’m gone I reckon Jeems Henery’ll larn them young uns o’ yours all the devilment in the world.”

“Gracious!”

James Henry veered into view just then around the corner of the house.

“Jeems Henery,” called the Angel sternly, “come hyeh!” And James Henry stood before the bar of the Angel’s judgment.

“Jeems Henery, air you the gamblin’est boy on Viper?” James Henry nodded cheerfully.

“Air you the cussin’est boy on Viper?” Again there was a nod of cheerful acknowledgment.

“Jeems Henery, air you the bigges’ liar on Viper?” James Henry, looking with adoring eyes at the Angel, nodded shameless shame for the third time, and the Angel turned triumphantly.

“Thar now!” Astounded, St. Hilda looked from one brother to the other.

“Well, not one word of this have I heard before.”

## THE ANGEL FROM VIPER

“Jeems Henery is a sly un—ain’t you, Jeems Henery?”

“Uh-huh.”

“Ain’t nobody who can ketch up with Jeems Henery ’ceptin’ me.”

“Well, Willie, if this is more than I can handle, don’t you think you’d better not go home but stay here and help me with James Henry?” The Angel did not even hesitate.

“I reckon I better,” he said, and he visibly swelled with importance. “I had to lam’ Jeems Henery this mornin’, an’ I reckon I’ll have to keep on lammin’ him ’most every day.”

“Don’t you lam’ James Henry at all,” said St. Hilda decisively.

“All right,” said the Angel. “Jeems Henery, git about yo’ work now.”

Thereafter St. Hilda kept watch on James Henry and he was, indeed, a sly one. There was gambling going on. St. Hilda did not encourage tale-bearing, but she knew it was going on. Still she could not catch James Henry. One day the Angel came to her.

“I’ve got Jeems Henery to stop gamblin’,” he whispered, “an’ I didn’t have to lam’ him.” And, indeed, gambling thereafter ceased. The young man who had come for the summer to teach the boys the games of the outside world

## THE ANGEL FROM VIPER

reported that much swearing had been going on but that swearing too had stopped.

"I've got Jeems Henery to stop cussin'," reported the Angel, and so St. Hilda rewarded him with the easy care of the nice new stable she had built on the hillside. His duty was to clean it and set things in order every day.

Some ten days later she was passing near the scene of the Angel's new activities, and she hailed him.

"How are you getting along?" she called.

"Come right on, Miss Hildy," shouted the Angel. "I got ever'thing cleaned up. Come on an' look in the *furthest* corners!"

St. Hilda went on, but ten minutes later she had to pass that way again and she did look in. Nothing had been done. The stable was in confusion and a pitchfork lay prongs upward midway of the barn door.

"How's this, Ephraim?" she asked, mystified. Ephraim was a fourteen-year-old boy who did the strenuous work of the barn.

"Why, Miss Hildy, I jes' hain't had time to clean up yit."

"*You* haven't had time?" she echoed in more mystery. "That isn't your work—it's Willie's." It was Ephraim's turn for mystery.

"Why, Miss Hildy, Willie told me more'n a

## THE ANGEL FROM VIPER

week ago that you said fer me to do *all* the cleanin' up."

"Do you mean to say that you've been doing this work for over a week? What's Willie been doing?"

"Not a lick—jes' settin' aroun' studyin' an' whistlin'."

St. Hilda went swiftly down the hill, herself in deep study, and she summoned the Angel to the bar of her judgment. The Angel writhed and wormed, but it was no use, and at last with smile, violet eyes, and halo the Angel spoke the truth. Then a great light dawned for St. Hilda, and she played its searching rays on the Angel's past and he spoke more truth, leaving her gasping and aghast.

"Why—why did you say all that about your poor little brother?"

The Angel's answer was prompt. "Why, I figgered that you *couldn't* ketch Jeems Henery an' *wouldn't* ketch me. An'," the Angel added dreamily, "it come might' nigh bein' that-away if I just had——"

"You're a horrid, wicked little boy," St. Hilda cried, but the Angel would not be perturbed, for he was a practical moralist.

"Jeems Henery," he called into space, "come hyeh!" And out of space James Henry came,

## THE ANGEL FROM VIPER

as though around the corner he had been waiting the summons.

“Jeems Henery, who was the gamblin’est, cussin’est, lyin’est boy on Viper?”

“My big brother Bill!” shouted Jeems Henery proudly.

“Who stopped gamblin’, cussin’, an’ lyin’?”

“My big brother Bill!”

“Who stopped all these young uns o’ Miss Hildy’s from cussin’ an’ gamblin’?” And Jeems Henery shouted: “My big brother Bill!” The Angel, well pleased, turned to St. Hilda.

“Thar now,” he said triumphantly, and seeing that he had reduced St. Hilda to helpless pulp he waved his hand.

“Git back to yo’ work, Jeems Henery.” But St. Hilda was not yet all pulp.

“Willie,” she asked warily, “when did *you* stop lying?”

“Why, jes’ now!” There was in the Angel’s face a trace of wonder at St. Hilda’s lack of understanding.

“How did James Henry know?” The mild wonder persisted.

“Jeems Henery knows *me!*” St. Hilda was all pulp now, but it was late afternoon, and birds were singing in the woods, and her little



## THE ANGEL FROM VIPER

people were singing as they worked in fields; and her heart was full. She spoke gently.

“Go on back to work, Willie,” she was about to say, but the Angel had gone a-dreaming and his face was sad, and she said instead:

“What is it, Willie?”

“I know whut’s been the matter with me, Miss Hildy—I hain’t been the same since my mother died six year ago.” For a moment St. Hilda took a little silence to gain self-control.

“You mean,” she said sternly, “‘come *might’ nigh dyin’*,” Willie, and *two* years ago.”

“Well, Miss Hildy, hit ’pears like six.” Her brain whirled at the working of his, but his eyes, his smile, and the halo, glorified just then by a bar of sunlight, were too much for St. Hilda, and she gathered him into her arms.

“Oh, Willie, Willie,” she half-sobbed, “I don’t know what to do with you!” And then, to comfort her, the Angel spoke gently:

“Miss Hildy, jes’ don’t do—nothin’.”

## THE POPE OF THE BIG SANDY

HE entered a log cabin in the Kentucky hills. An old woman with a pair of scissors cut the tie that bound him to his mother and put him in swaddling-clothes of homespun. Now, in silk pajamas, with three doctors and two nurses to make his going easy, he was on his way out of a suite of rooms ten stories above the splendor of Fifth Avenue.

It was early morning. A taxi swung into the paved circle in front of the hotel below and a little man in slouch hat and black frock coat, and with his trousers in his boots, stepped gingerly out. He took off the hat with one hand, dropped his saddle-pockets from the other, and mopped his forehead with a bandanna handkerchief.

“My God, brother,” he said to the grinning driver, “I tol’ ye to hurry, but I didn’t ’low you’d *fly*! How much d’ I owe ye an’ how do I git in hyeh?”

A giant in a gold-braided uniform had picked up the saddle-pockets when the little man turned.

## THE POPE OF THE BIG SANDY

“Well, now, that’s clever of ye,” he said, thrusting out his hand. “I reckon you air the proprietor—how’s the Pope?”

“Sure, I dunno, sor—this way, sor.” The astonished giant pointed to the swinging door and turned for light to the taxi man who, doubled with laughter over his wheel, tapped his forehead. At the desk the little man pushed his hat back and put both elbows down.

“Whar’s the Pope?”

“The Pope!” From behind, the giant was making frantic signs, but the clerk’s brow cleared. “Oh, yes—front!”

The little man gasped and swayed as the elevator shot upward, but a moment later the little judge of Happy Valley and the Pope of the Big Sandy were hand in hand.

“How’re yo’ folks, judge?”

“Stirrin’—how’re you, Jim?”

“Ain’t stirrin’ at all.”

“Shucks, you’ll be up an’ aroun’ in no time.”

“I ain’t goin’ to git up again.”

“Don’t you git stubborn now, Jim.”

A nurse brought in some medicine and the Pope took it with a wry face. The judge reached for his saddle-pockets and pulled out a bottle of white liquor with a stopper of corn-shucks.

“This’ll take the bad taste out o’ yo’ mouth.”

“The docs won’t let me—but lemme smell

## THE POPE OF THE BIG SANDY

it." The judge had whipped out a twist of long green and again the Pope shook his head:

"Can't drink—can't chew!"

"Oh, Lord!" The judge bit off a mouthful and a moment later walked to the window and, with his first and second fingers forked over his lips, ejected an amber stream.

"Good Lord, judge—don't do that. You'll splatter a million people." He called for a spittoon and the judge grunted disgustedly.

"I'd hate to live in a place whar a feller can't spit out o' his own window."

"Don't you like it?"

"Hit looks like circus day—I got the headache already."

A telegram was brought in.

"Been seein' a lot about you in the papers," said the judge, and the Pope waved wearily to a pile of dailies. There were columns about him in those papers—about his meteoric rise: how he started a poor boy in the mountains, studied by candle-light, taught school in the hills: how a vision of their future came to him even that early and how he clung to that vision all his life, turning, twisting for option money on coal lands, making a little sale now and then, but always options and more options and sales and more sales, until now the poor mountain boy was a king among the coal barons of the land.

## THE POPE OF THE BIG SANDY

“ Judge,” said the Pope, “ the votin’s started down home.”

“ How’s it goin’ ? ”

“ Easy.”

“ Been spendin’ any money ? ”

“ Not a cent.”

“ Ole Bill Maddox is.”

“ Why, judge, I’m the daddy an’ granddaddy o’ that town. I built streets and sidewalks for it out o’ my own pocket. I put up two churches for ’em. I built the water-works, the bank, an’ God knows what all. Ole Bill Maddox can’t turn a wheel against *me*.” The little judge was marvelling: here was a man who had refused all his life to run for office, who could have been congressman, senator, governor; and who had succumbed at last.

“ Jim, what in blue hell do you want that office fer ? ”

“ To make folks realize their duties as citizens,” said the Pope patiently; “ to maintain streets and sidewalks and water-works and sewers an’ become an independent community, instead o’ layin’ back on other folks ! ”

“ How about all them churches you been buildin’ all over them mountains—air they self-sustainin’ ? ”

“ Well, they do need a little help now and then.” The judge grunted.



## THE POPE OF THE BIG SANDY

Through the morning many cards were brought the Pope, but the doctors allowed no business. To amuse himself the Pope sent the judge into the sitting-room to listen to the million-dollar project of one sleek young man, and the judge reported:

“Nothin’ doin’—he’s got a bad eye.”

“Right,” said the Pope. At twelve o’clock the judge looked at his watch:

“Dinner-time.” And the Pope ordered his old mountain friend cabbage, bacon, and greens.

“Judge, I got to sleep now. I’ve got a car down below. After dinner you can take a ride or you can take a walk.”

“You can’t git me into a automobile an’ I’m afeard to walk. I’d git run over. I’ll jus’ hang aroun’.”

Another telegram was brought in.

“Runnin’ easy an’ winnin’ in a walk,” said the Pope. “It’s a cinch. You can open anything else that comes while I’m asleep.”

The judge himself had not slept well on the train; so he took off his boots, put his yarn-stockinged feet in one chair, and sitting up in another took a nap. An hour later the Pope called for him. The last telegram reported that he was so far ahead that none others would be sent until the committee started to count ballots.

## THE POPE OF THE BIG SANDY

“I’ve made you an executor in my will, judge,” he said, “an’ I want you to see that some things are done yourself.” The judge nodded.

“I want you to have a new church built in Happy Valley. I want you to give St. Hilda and that settlement school five thousand a year. An’”—he paused—“you know ole Bill Maddox cut me out an’ married Sally Ann Spurlock—how many children they got now, judge?”

“Ten—oldest, sixteen.”

“Well, I want you to see that every gold-durned one of ’em gits the chance to go to school.”

Now, old Bill Maddox was running against the Pope, and was fighting him hard, and the judge hated old Bill Maddox; so he said nothing. The Pope too was silent a long while.

“Judge, I got all my money out o’ the mountain folks. I robbed ’em right and left.”

“You ain’t never robbed nobody in Happy Valley,” said the judge a little grimly, and the Pope chuckled.

“No, you wouldn’t let me. I got all my money from ’em an’ do you know what I’m goin’ to do?”

“Git some more, I reckon.”

The Pope chuckled again: “I’m a-goin’ to

## THE POPE OF THE BIG SANDY

give it back to 'em. Churches, schools, libraries, hospitals, good roads—any durned thing in the world that will do 'em any good. It's all in my will. An', judge," he added with a little embarrassment, "I've sort o' fixed it so that when you want to help out a widder or a orphan in Happy Valley you can do it without always diggin' down into yo' own jeans."

"Shucks, don't you worry about me or the folks in Happy Valley—you done enough fer them lettin' 'em alone; an' that durned ole Bill Maddox, he's a fightin' you right now afore yo' face an' behind yo' back. He's the meanest——"

"Makes no difference. His children ain't to blame an' thar's Sally Ann." The Pope yawned and his brow wrinkled with pain. "I better take a little more sleep, judge." A doctor came in and felt the Pope's pulse and the judge left the room worried by the physician's face and his whispered direction to the nurse to summon another doctor.

An hour later the Pope called him back, and his voice was weak:

"Bring in every telegram, judge."

"You mustn't bother," interposed the doctor firmly, and the Pope's mouth set and the old dominant gleam came into his eyes.

"Bring in every telegram," he repeated.

## THE POPE OF THE BIG SANDY

Outside, in the hallway, the judge waylaid the doctor.

“Ain’t he goin’ to pull through?”

“One chance in a thousand,” was the curt answer.

About three o’clock the judge got a telegram that made him swear fearfully, and thereafter they came fast. The Pope would use no money. The judge wired the Pope’s manager warily offering a thousand of his own. The answer came—“Too late.” At five o’clock they were running neck and neck. Ten minutes before the polls closed old Bill Maddox rounded up twenty more votes and victory was his. And all the while the judge was making reports to the Pope:

“Runnin’ easy.”

“It’s a cinch.”

“Ole Bill fighting tooth and toe-nail but you got him, Jim.”

“Countin’ the votes now.”

“Air ye shore, Jim, you want to leave all that money fer old Bill’s brats?—he’s a hound.”

“Ole Bill comin’ up a little, Jim.”

And then came that last telegram, reporting defeat, and with it crushed in his hand the judge made his last report:

“All over. You’ve got ’em, Jim. Hooray! Can’t you hear ’em yell?” The Pope’s white

## THE POPE OF THE BIG SANDY

mouth smiled and his eyelids flickered, but his eyes stayed closed.

“ Jim, I wouldn’t give *all* that money to old Bill’s brats—just some fer Sally Ann.”

“ All of it for old Bill’s—for Sally Ann’s children, the mountain folks, an’ the old home town.” The Pope opened his eyes and he spoke:

“ All of you—nurses an’ docs—git out o’ here, please.” And knowing that the end was nigh they quietly withdrew.

“ Judge, you ain’t no actor—you’re a ham ! ”

“ Whut you mean, Jim ? ” asked the judge, for in truth he did not understand—not just then. The roar of the city rose from below, but the sunset came through the window as through all windows of the world. The Pope’s hand reached for the judge’s hand. His lips moved and the judge bent low.

“ Beat ! ” whispered the Pope; “ beat, by God ! Beat—for—councilman—in—my—own home town.” And because he knew his fellow man, the good and the bad, the Pope passed with a smile.

## THE GODDESS OF HAPPY VALLEY

### I

**T**HE professor stood at the window of his study waiting for Her to come home. The wind outside was high and whipped her skirts close to her magnificent body as, breasting it unconcernedly, she came with a long, slow stride around a corner down the street. Now, as always whenever he saw her move, he thought of the line in Virgil, for even in her walk she showed the goddess. And Juno was her name.

He met her at the door and he did not have to stoop to kiss her. "What is it, dear?" he said quickly, for deep in her eyes, which looked level with his, he saw trouble.

She handed him a letter and walked to the window—looking out at the gathering storm. The letter was from her home away down in the Kentucky hills—from the Mission teacher in Happy Valley.

There was an epidemic of typhoid down there. It was spreading through the school and through



## THE GODDESS OF HAPPY VALLEY

the hills. They were without nurses or doctors, and they needed help.

“Too bad, too bad,” he murmured, and he turned anxiously.

“I must go,” she said, with a catch in her breath. “One cabin is built above another all the way up the creeks down there. The springs are by the stream. High water floods all of them, and the infection goes with the tide. And the poor things don’t know—they don’t know. Oh, I must go!”

For a moment he was silent, and then he got up and put his arms about her. He was smiling.

“Then, I’ll go with you.” She wheeled quickly.

“No, no, no! You can’t leave your work, and—remember!”

He did remember how useless it had been to argue with her, and he knew it was useless now. Moreover, if she was going at all, it was like her to go at once—like her to go up-stairs at once to her packing and leave him in the darkened study alone.

They had been married two years. He had seen her first entering his own classroom, and straightway that Latin line took permanent quarters in his brain, so that he was almost startled when he learned her Olympic name. It

## THE GODDESS OF HAPPY VALLEY

was not long before he found himself irresistibly drawn to her big, serious eyes that never wandered in a moment's inattention, found himself expounding directly to her—a fact already discovered by every girl in the classroom except Juno herself; and she never did discover, for no one was intimate enough to tell her seriously, and there was that about her that forbade the telling in badinage. With all secrecy, and shyly almost, he set about to learn what he could about her, and that was little indeed.

She came from the mountains of Kentucky, she had won a scholarship in the Bluegrass region of the same State, had come North, and was living with painful economy working her way through college, he heard, as a waitress in the dining-hall. He was rather shocked to hear of one incident. The girl who was the head of all athletics in college had once addressed rather sharp words to Juno, who had been persuaded to try for the basket-ball team. The mountain girl did not respond in kind. Instead, her big eyes narrowed to volcanic slits, she caught the champion shot-putter by the shoulders, shook her until her hair came down, and then, with fists doubled, had stood waiting for more trouble.

When the term closed the professor stayed on to finish some experiments he had on hand,

## THE GODDESS OF HAPPY VALLEY

and at dinner in his boarding-house the next night he nearly overturned his soup-plate, for it was the goddess who had placed it before him. She was there for the summer—not having money to go home—as a general helper in the household and living under the same roof. She too was going on with her studies, and he offered to help her.

He found her a source of puzzling surprises. While she was from the South, she was not Southern in speech, sentiments, ideas, or ideals. Her voice was not Southern and, while she elided final consonants, her intonation was not of the South. Indeed she would startle him every now and then by dropping some archaic word or old form of expression that made him think of Chaucer. Her feeling toward the negro was precisely what his was, and once when he halted in some stricture on the Confederacy and started to apologize she laughed.

“All my folks,” she said, “fit fer the Union—as we say down there,” she added with a smile.

So that gradually he began to realize that the Appalachian Range, while being parts of the Southern States, was not of them at all, but was a region *sui generis*, and that its inhabitants were the only Americans who had never swerved in fealty to the flag.

## THE GODDESS OF HAPPY VALLEY

By midsummer it was all over with him, and he shocked his own reticent soul by blurting out one day: "I want you to marry me." The words had been shot from him by some inner dynamic force, and at the moment he would have given anything he had could he have taken them back. He waited in terror, and very frankly and proudly she lifted her heavy lashes, looked straight into his eyes, and firmly said:

"No!"

He went away then, but his relief was not what he thought it would be. He could not forget that her mouth quivered slightly, and that there seemed to be a faint weakening in the depths of her eyes when he told her good-bye. He could climb no mountain that he did not see her striding as from Olympus down it. He walked by no seashore that he did not see her rising from the waves, and again he went to her, and again he asked. And this time, just as frankly and proudly, she looked him in the eyes and said:

"Yes—on one condition."

"Name it."

"That you don't go to my home and my people for five years." He laughed.

"Why, you big, beautiful, silly young person, I know mountains and mountaineers."

## THE GODDESS OF HAPPY VALLEY

“Yes—of Europe—but not mine.”

“Very well,” he said, and, not knowing women, he asked:

“Why didn’t you say ‘Yes’ the first time?”

“I don’t know,” she said.

### II

She had lifted her voice first, one spring dawn, in a log cabin that clung to the steep bank of Clover Fork, and her wail rose above the rush of its high waters—above the song of a wood-thrush in the top of a poplar high above her. Somewhere her mother had heard the word Juno, and the mere sound of the word appealed to her starved sense of beauty as did one of the old-fashioned flowers she planted in her tiny yard. So the mother gave the child that name and, like the name, the child grew up, tall, slow, and majestic of movement, singularly gentle and quiet, except when aroused, and then her wrath and her might were primeval.

St. Hilda, the Mission teacher, was the first from the outside world to be drawn to her. She had stopped in at the cabin on Clover one day to find the mother of the family ill in bed, and twelve-year-old Juno acting as cook and mother for a brood of ten. A few months later



## THE GODDESS OF HAPPY VALLEY

she persuaded the father to let the girl come down to her school, and in the succeeding years she became St. Hilda's right hand and the mainstay in the supervision of the kitchen, housework, and laundry, and even in the management of the Mission's farm. No one had the subtle understanding of St. Hilda's charges as had Juno—no one could handle them quite so well. So that it was with real grief and great personal loss that St. Hilda opened the way for Juno to go to school in the Bluegrass. And now, one sunset in mid-May, she was back at the Mission in Happy Valley, and the two were in each other's arms.

Happy Valley it was no longer, for throughout it the plague had spread fear or sickness or death in every little home. St. Hilda had gathered her own little sufferers in tents collected from a railway-camp over the mountains, a surveying party, and from the Bluegrass. A volunteer doctor had come from the "settlements," and two nurses, and so Juno took to the outside work up and down the river, up every little creek, and out in the hills. All day and far into the night she was gone. Sometimes she did not for days come back to the Mission. Her face grew white and drawn, and her cheeks hollow from poor food, meagre snatches of sleep, and untiring work. The doctor warned



## THE GODDESS OF HAPPY VALLEY

her, St. Hilda warned her, she got anxious warning letters from her husband, but on she went. And the inevitable happened.

One hot midday, as she watched by the bedside of a little patient with a branch of maple in her hand to keep the flies away, she drowsed, and one of the wretched little insects lighted on her moist red lips. Soon thereafter the "walking typhoid" caught her as she was striding past Lum Chapman's blacksmith-shop. Instinctively she kept on toward home, and reached there raving: "Don't let him come—don't let him come!" And when the news got about the heart of Happy Valley almost bled.

Only St. Hilda guessed what the mutterings of the sick girl meant, but she did not heed them, and the professor from New England soon crossed Mason and Dixon's line for the first time in his life. For the first time he fell under the spell of the Southern hills—graceful, gracious big hills, real mountains, densely wooded like thickets to their very tops—so densely wooded, indeed, that they seemed overspread with a great shaggy green rug that swept on and on over the folds of the hills as though billowed up by a mighty wind beneath. And the lights, the mists, the drifting cloud shadows! Why had Juno not wanted him to see them? And when he took to horseback

## THE GODDESS OF HAPPY VALLEY

and mounted through that billowing rug, through ferns stirrup-high, with flowers innumerable nodding on either side of the trail and the air of the first dawn in his nostrils—mounted to the top of the Big Black, rode for miles along its gently waving summit, and saw at every turn of the path the majestic supernal beauty of the mighty green waves that swept on and on before him, in wonder he kept asking himself:

“ Why—why ? ”

He had not come into contact yet with the humanity in those hills. The log cabins he had seen from the train—clinging to the hill-sides, nestling in little coves amid apple-trees, or close to the banks of rushing little creeks—had struck him as most picturesque and charming, and an occasional old mill, with its big water-wheel, boxed-in, grass-hung mill-race half hidden by weeping willows, had given him sheer delight; but now he was meeting the people in the road and could see them close at hand in doorways and porches of the wretched little houses that he passed. How mean, meagre, narrow, and poverty-stricken must be their lives !

At one cabin he had to stop for midday dinner, for the word “ lunch,” he found, was unknown. A slatternly woman with scraggling black hair,

## THE GODDESS OF HAPPY VALLEY

and with three dirty children clinging to her dirty apron, "reckoned she mought git him a bite," and disappeared. Flies swarmed over him when he sat in the porch. The rancid smell of bedding struck his sensitive nostrils from within. He heard the loud squawking of a chicken cease suddenly, and his hunger-gnawed stomach almost turned when he suddenly realized just what it meant. When called within, it was dirt and flies, flies and dirt, everywhere. He sat in a chair with a smooth-worn cane bottom so low that his chin was just above the table. The table-cover was of greasy oilcloth. His tumbler was cloudy, unclean, and the milk was thin and sour. Thick slices of fat bacon swam in a dish of grease, blood was perceptible in the joints of the freshly killed, half-cooked chicken, and the flies swarmed.

As he rode away he began to get a glimmer of light. Perhaps Juno—his Juno—had once lived like that; perhaps her people did yet.

There was another mountain to climb, and a stranger who was going his way offered to act as guide. The stranger was a Kentuckian, he said, from the Bluegrass region, and he was buying timber through the hills. He volunteered this, but the New England man made no self-revelment. Instead he burst out:

"*How* do these people live this way?"

## THE GODDESS OF HAPPY VALLEY

“They have to—they’re pretty poor.”

“They don’t have to keep—dirty.”

“They’ve got used to it, and so would you if your folks had been living out in this wilderness for a hundred years.”

From a yard that they passed, a boy with a vacant face and retreating forehead dropped his axe to stare at them.

“That’s the second one I’ve seen,” said the professor.

“Yes, idiots are not unusual in these mountains—inbreeding!”

“Do they still have moonshining and feuds and all that yet?”

“Plenty of moonshining. The feuds are all over practically, though I did hear that the big feud over the mountain was likely to be stirred up again—the old Camp and Adkin feud.” A question came faintly from behind:

“Do you know any of the Camps?”

“Used to know old Red King Camp, the leader. He’s in the penitentiary now for killing a man. What’s the matter?” He turned in his saddle, but the New Englander had recovered himself.

“Nothing—nothing. It seems awful to a Northern man.”

The stranger thought he had heard a groan behind him, and he had—King Camp was the

## THE GODDESS OF HAPPY VALLEY

name of the Northern man's father-in-law. Ah, he was beginning to understand; but why did Juno not want him to come for five years?

"Is—is Red King Camp—how long was his sentence?"

"Let's see—he's been in two years, and I heard he had three years more. Yes, I remember—he got five years."

Once more the Bluegrass man thought he heard a groan, but the other was only clearing his throat. The New Englander asked no more questions, and about two hours by sun they rode over a ridge and down to the bed of Clover Fork.

"Well, stranger, we part here. You go up to the head of the creek, and anybody'll tell you where Red King lives. There's plenty of moonshining up that way, and if anybody asks your name and your business—tell 'em quick. They won't bother you. And if I were you I wouldn't criticise these people to *anybody*. They're morbidly sensitive, and you never know when you are giving mortal offense. And, by the way, most offenses *are* mortal in these hills."

"Thank you. Good-by—and thank you."

Everybody knew where old King Camp lived—"Fust house a leetle way down t'other side o' the mountain from the head of Clover."



## THE GODDESS OF HAPPY VALLEY

And nobody asked him his name or his business. Near dusk he was at the head of Little Clover and looking down on Happy Valley. The rimming mountains were close overhung with motionless wet clouds. Above and through them lightning flashed, and thunder cracked and boomed like encircling artillery around the horizon. The wind came with the rush of mighty wings, and blackness dropped like a curtain. By one flash of lightning he saw a great field of corn, by another a big, comfortable barn, a garden, a trim picket-fence, a yard full of flowers, and a log house the like of which he had not seen in the hills—and a new light came—Juno's work! A torrent of rain swept after him as he stepped upon the porch and knocked on the door. A moment later he was looking at the kindest and most motherly face and into the kindest eyes he had ever seen.

"I'm Juno's husband," he said simply. For a moment she blinked up at him bewilderedly through brass-rimmed spectacles, and then she put her arms around him and bent back to look up at him again. Then, still without a word, she led him on tiptoe to an open door and pointed.

"She's in thar." And there she lay—his Juno—thin, white, unconscious, her beauty spiritualized, glorified. He sat simply looking



## THE GODDESS OF HAPPY VALLEY

at her—how long he did not know—until he felt a gentle touch on his shoulder. It was Juno's mother beckoning him to supper.

Going out he saw Juno's hand in everything—the hand-woven rag carpet, the curtains at the windows, the andirons at the log fire—for summer nights in those hills are always cool—saw it in the kitchen, the table-cloth, napkins, even though they were in rings, the dishes, the food, the neatness in everything. He could see the likeness of Juno to the gentle-voiced old woman who would talk of nothing but her daughter. In a moment she was calling him "Jim," and few others than his dead mother had ever called him that. And when at bedtime she said, "Don't let her die, Jim," he leaned down and kissed her—something her own sons when grown up had never done.

"No, mother," he said, and the word did not come hard.

### III

Juno had been delirious since the day she was stricken. Her mutterings had been disjointed and unintelligible, but that night, while Mother Camp and the New Englander sat at her bedside, she said again:

"Don't let him come."

"She ain't said that for three days now,"

## THE GODDESS OF HAPPY VALLEY

said Mother Camp. "Whut d' you s'pose she means?" The husband shook his head.

Next morning the nurse for whom St. Hilda had sent arrived from the Bluegrass, and the New Englander started down Little Clover to the settlement school to consult the doctor and see St. Hilda. It was a brilliant, drenched June day, and never, he believed, had his eyes rested on such a glory of green and gold. Already he had been heralded in the swift way common in the hills, and all who saw him coming knew who he was. He was Juno's man, and the people straightway called him—Jim. When he stood on St. Hilda's porch her words and her drawn, anxious face went straight to his heart. There was nobody like Juno, and without Juno she did not know how she could get along. Her own little sufferers were in tents about her, and there was only one nurse for them. Juno, said the doctor, might be unconscious for a long time, and her nurse must be with her night and day: so who would take Juno's place throughout the hills she did not know. At once the New Englander, who knew a good deal about medicine and something of typhoid, found himself offering to do all he could. Then and there the Mission teacher gave him a list of patients, and then and there, with a thermometer in his pocket and a medicine-case in his hand, he

## THE GODDESS OF HAPPY VALLEY

started on his first round. The people were very shy with him at first. In a few days he was promoted to Doctor Jim, and soon he was plain "Doc" to all. By every mouth that opened he found Juno's name blessed, and many were the tales of what she had done. She had saved wild Jay Dawn's little girl and Lum Chapman's first-born. She had brought old Aunt Sis Stidham back from the shadow of the grave, and had turned that tart, irreverent old person's erring feet back into the way of the Lord. Night and day, and through wind and storm, she had travelled the hills, healing the sick and laying out and helping to bury the dead. Apparently there was not a man, woman, or child in Happy Valley who did not love her or have some reason to be grateful, and when in the open-air meeting-house Parson Small told of her work and prayed that her life be spared, there were fervent "Amens," or tears and sobs, from all. Doctor Jim soon found himself getting deeply interested in the people, and when he contrasted the lives of those whom the influence of the Mission school had not yet reached with the folks in Happy Valley he began to realize the amazing good that St. Hilda was doing in the hills. What a place he was earning for himself he was yet to learn, but through some mystification an inkling came. To be sure, everybody

## THE GODDESS OF HAPPY VALLEY

spoke to him as though he were a fixture in the land. He could pass no door that somebody did not ask him to come in and rest a spell, or stay all night. He never went by the mill that Aunt Jane did not have a glass of buttermilk for him and Uncle Jerry did not try to entice him in for a talk. Several times the little judge of Happy Valley had ridden down to ask after Juno and to talk with him. Pleasant Trouble waved his crutch from a hillside and shouted himself at Doctor Jim's disposal for any purpose whatever. But one sunset he had stopped at Lum Chapman's blacksmith-shop just as a big, black-haired fellow, with a pistol buckled around him, was reeling away. The men greeted him rather solemnly, and he felt that they wanted to say something to him, but no one spoke. He saw Jay Dawn nod curtly to Pleasant Trouble, who got briskly up and walked up the road with him until they were in sight of Juno's home. For three days thereafter Pleasant was waiting for him at the shop and walked the same space with him. The next day Jay Dawn spoke with some embarrassment to him:

"Have you got a gun?"

"No." Jay handed forth one.

"Oh, no!" said Doctor Jim.

"Go on!" said Jay shortly; "I got another un."

## THE GODDESS OF HAPPY VALLEY

“ But why do I need a gun ? ” Jay was distinctly embarrassed.

“ Well,” he drawled, “ thar’s some purty bad fellers ’bout hyeh, an’ when they gits drunk they might do somethin’. Now that Jerry Lipps you seed hyeh t’other day a-staggerin’ off drunk—he’s bad. An’ you do a heap o’ travellin’ alone. This ain’t fer you to kill nobody but jus’ kind o’ to perfect yerself.”

“ All right,” laughed Doctor Jim. “ I couldn’t hit a barn—” but to humor Jay he took the weapon, and this time Pleasant Trouble did not walk home with him.

Later he mentioned the matter to St. Hilda, who looked very grave.

“ Yes, Jerry Lipps is a bad man. He’s just out of the penitentiary. Pleasant walked home with you to protect you from him. They won’t let him do anything to you openly. And Jay gave you that gun in case he should attack you when nobody was around.”

“ But what has the fellow got against me ? ” The teacher hesitated.

“ Well, Jerry used to be in love with Juno, but she would never have anything to do with him and he never would let her have anything to do with anybody else. He shot one boy, and shot at another, and he has always sworn that he would kill the man she married.”



## THE GODDESS OF HAPPY VALLEY

“Nonsense!” he said, but going home that night Doctor Jim carried the gun where he could get at it quickly.

“My God!” he muttered with grim humor; “no wonder Juno didn’t want me to come.”

It was only a few days later that Doctor Jim came out of Lum Chapman’s house and paused in the path looking up Wolf Run. Jerry Lipps’s sister lived half a mile above and he had just heard that her little daughter was down with the fever. Jerry might be staying with the sister, but Doctor Jim’s duty was now up there, and, in spite of the warnings given him, he did not hesitate. The woman stared when he told who he was and why he had come, but she nodded and pointed to the bed where the child lay. He put his pistol on the bed, thrust a thermometer into the little girl’s mouth and began taking her pulse. A hand swept the pistol from the bed and, when he turned around, about all he could think was: “How extraordinary!”

Jerry, red with rage and drink, was at the kitchen door fumbling at the butt of his pistol, while his sister had Doctor Jim’s gun levelled at her brother’s heart.

“You can’t tech him,” she said coolly, “an’ if you pull that gun out an inch furdur I’ll kill ye as shore as thar’s a God in heaven.” And

## THE GODDESS OF HAPPY VALLEY

at that moment the door opened and Pleasant Trouble swung in on his crutch and grinned. Doctor Jim then heard the tongue-lashing of his life. The woman's volubility was like a mill-race, and her command of vitriolic epithets was beyond his ken. She recited what Juno had done, Doctor Jim was doing, the things Jerry had done and left undone, and wound up:

"You never was wuth Juno's little finger, an' you ain't wuth *his* little finger-nail now. Take his gun, Pleas. Take him to the State line, an' don't you boys let him come back agin until he's stopped drinkin', got a suit o' clothes, an' a job."

"Why, Mandy," said Pleasant, "hit's kind o' funny, but Lum an' Jay an' me fixed hit up about an hour ago that we aimed to do that very thing. I sead Doc a-comin' up hyeh, an' was afeard I mought be too late: but if I'd 'a' knowed you was hyeh I wouldn't 'a' worried."

Again Doctor Jim was thinking, "How extraordinary!" But this time how extraordinary it was that the man really meant to shoot him. Somehow he began to understand.

Still grinning, Pleasant Trouble had swung across the room, whipped Jerry's pistol from the holster, and with it motioned the owner toward the door. Then Doctor Jim rose.

## THE GODDESS OF HAPPY VALLEY

“Hold on!” he said, and he took the pistol from the woman’s hands, strode straight up to Jerry and smiled. Now, from the top of Virginia down through seven Southern States to Georgia there are some three million mountaineers, and it is doubtful if among them all any other three pairs of ears ever heard such words as Professor James Blagden of New England spoke now:

“Jerry, I don’t blame you for having loved Juno, or for loving her now. I wouldn’t blame anybody. I even understand now why you wanted to kill me, but that would have been—silly. Give him back his gun, Pleasant,” he added, still smiling, “and give this one back to Jay.” He reached in his pocket, pulled forth two cigars and handed one to each. “Now you two sit down and smoke, and in a moment I’ll go along with you, and we’ll help Jerry get a job.” And thereupon Doctor Jim turned around to his little patient. Dazed and a bit hypnotized, Jerry took the cigar and thrust his pistol into his holster.

“I’ll be gittin’ along,” he said sullenly, and made for the door. Pleasant followed him. At the road Jerry turned one way and Pleasant the other.

“You heered whut Mandy and me said,” drawled Pleasant. “If you poke yore nose over

## THE GODDESS OF HAPPY VALLEY

the line 'bout three of us will shoot you on sight. We'd do it fer Juno, an' if she ain't alive we'll do it fer Doctor Jim."

"I was a-goin' over thar anyways," said Jerry, "an' I'll come back when I please. You one-legged limb o' Satan—you go plum'"—Pleasant's eyes began to glitter—"back to him."

Pleasant laughed, and as they walked their separate ways the same question was in the minds of both:

"Now, whut the hell did he mean by 'silly'?"

### IV

Only the next morning a happy day dawned. Old King Camp came home with his sons—two stalwart boys and a giant father. Doctor Jim looked long at old King's hair, which was bushy and jet-black. He stood it as long as he could and then he asked:

"Why do people on the other side of the mountain call you *Red King Camp*?" he asked.

"They don't—not more'n once," was the grim answer. "I'm *Black King Camp*. Red's my cousin, but I don't claim him."

One load was off Doctor Jim's heart. His father-in-law was like his name in many ways, and Doctor Jim liked him straightway and

## THE GODDESS OF HAPPY VALLEY

Black King liked Doctor Jim. Old King shook his head.

“I don’t see why Juno didn’t bring you down here long ago,” he said, and Doctor Jim did not try to explain—he couldn’t. It must have been fear of Jerry—and he believed that Jerry, too, was now out of the way.

About noon Juno came back for the first time from another world. She did not open her eyes, but she heard voices and knew what they were saying. Her mother was talking in the next room to somebody whom she called Jim. Who could Jim be? And then she heard the man’s voice. Her eyes opened slowly on the nurse, her lips moved, but before she could frame the question her heart throbbed so that she went back into unconsciousness again. But the nurse saw and told, and when Juno came back again she saw her husband and smiled without surprise or fright.

“I dreamed you were here,” she whispered, “and I’m dreaming right now that you are here. Why, I see you.” Gently he took her face in his hands, and when she felt his touch she looked at him wildly and the tears sprang. From that day on she gained fast, and from the nurse, her mother, and the neighbors she soon knew the story of Doctor Jim.

“So you thought Red King was my father,”



## THE GODDESS OF HAPPY VALLEY

she said, "and that he was in the penitentiary?" Doctor Jim nodded shamefacedly.

"Well, even that wouldn't have been so bad—not down here. And maybe you thought I didn't want you to come on account of Jerry Lipps." Again Doctor Jim nodded admission, and Juno laughed.

"I never thought of that, and if I had," she added proudly and scornfully, "I never would have been afraid—for *you*."

"Then why didn't you want me to come?"

"I didn't know *you*—didn't know the big, *big* man you are. Now I'm ashamed—and happy."

One morning, three weeks later, Jay Dawn and Lum Chapman brought up a litter that Lum had made, and they two and Black King and Doctor Jim made ready to carry Juno down the mountain. Jerry Lipps was passing in the road when they bore her out the gate, and he started to sidle by with averted eyes. Doctor Jim halted.

"Here, Jerry!" he called. "You take my place." And Jerry, red as an oak leaf in autumn, stepped up to the litter, and up at her old lover Juno smiled.

"Doc," said Jerry, "I got a job."

Behind, Pleasant Trouble swung along with Doctor Jim. Mother Camp followed on horseback. People ran from every house to greet

## THE GODDESS OF HAPPY VALLEY

Juno, or from high on the hillsides waved their hands and shouted "how-dyes" down to her. Soon they were at the Mission, where St. Hilda and Uncle Jerry and Aunt Jane were waiting on the porch, and where pale little boys and girls trooped weakly from the tents to welcome her. And then at a signal from Doctor Jim the four picked up the litter.

"Why, where are you going?" asked Juno.

"Never you mind," said Doctor Jim.

Through the little vineyard they went, up a little hill underneath cedars and blooming rhododendrons, and there on the top was a little cabin built of logs with the bark still on them, with a porch running around all sides but one, and supported by the trunks of little trees. The smell of cedar came from the open door, and all was as fresh and clean as the breath of the forest from which everything came—a home that had been the girl's lifelong dream. The Goddess of Happy Valley had her own little temple at last.

On the open-air sleeping-porch they sat that night alone.

"I'm going to help raise some money for that Mission down there," said Doctor Jim. "I don't know where any more good is being done, and I don't know any people who are more worth being helped than—your people."

## THE GODDESS OF HAPPY VALLEY

Happy Valley below was a-swarm with fire-flies. The murmur of the river over shallows rose to them. The cries of whippoorwills encircled them from the hillsides and over the mountain majestically rose the moon.

“And you and I are coming down every summer—to help.”

Juno gathered his hand in both her own and held it against her cheek.

“Jim—Doctor Jim—*my* Jim.”

## THE BATTLE-PRAYER OF PARSON SMALL

PARSON SMALL rose. From the tail-pocket of his long broadcloth coat he pulled a red bandanna handkerchief and blew his nose. He put the big blunt forefinger of his right hand on the text of the open Bible before him.

“Suffer—” he said. He glanced over his flock—the blacksmith, his wife, and her child, the old miller and Aunt Betsey, the Mission teacher and some of her brood, past Pleasant Trouble with his crutch across his half a lap, and to the heavy-set, middle-aged figure just slipping to a seat in the rear with a slouched hat in his hand. The parson’s glance grew stern and he closed the Great Book. Jeb Mullins, the newcomer, was—moonshiner and undesirable citizen in many ways. He had meant, said the parson, to preach straight from the word of God, but he would take up the matter in hand, and he glared with doubtful benevolence at Jeb’s moon face, grayish whiskers, and mild blue eyes. Many turned to follow his glance, and Jeb moved in his seat and his eyes began to

## THE BATTLE-PRAYER OF PARSON SMALL

roll, for all knew that the matter in hand was Jeb.

Straightway the parson turned his batteries on the very throne of King Alcohol and made it totter. Men "disguised by liquer" were not themselves. Whiskey made the fights and the feuds. It broke up meetings. It made men lie around in the woods and neglect their families. It stole brains and weakened bodies. It made women unhappy and debauched children. It turned Holy Christmas into a drunken orgy. And "right thar in their very midst," he thundered, was a satellite of the Devil-King, "who was a-doin' all these very things," and that limb of Satan must give up his still, come to the mourners' bench, and "wrassle with the Sperit or else be druv from the county and go down to burnin' damnation forevermore." And that was not all: this man, he had heard, was "a-detainin' a female," an' the little judge of Happy Valley would soon be hot on his trail. The parson mentioned no name in the indictment, but the stern faces of the women, the threatening looks of the men were too much for Jeb. He rose and bolted, and the parson halted.

"The wicked flee when no man pursueth!" he cried, and he raised hands for the benediction.

"Thar's been so much talk about drinkin'," muttered Aunt Sis Stidham as she swayed out,



## THE BATTLE-PRAYER OF PARSON SMALL

'that hit's made me plum' thirsty. I'd like to have a dram right now.'" Pleasant Trouble heard her and one eye in his solemn face gave her a covert wink.

The women folks had long clamored that their men should break up Jeb's still; and the men had stood the nagging and remained inactive through the hanging-together selfishness of the sex, for with Jeb gone where then would they drink their drams and play old sledge? But now Jeb was "a-detainin' of a female," and that was going too far. For a full week Jeb was seen no more, for three reasons: he was arranging an important matter with Pleasant Trouble; he was brooding over the public humiliation that the parson had visited on him; and he knew that he might be waited upon any day by a committee of his fellow citizens and customers headed by a particular enemy of his. And indeed such a committee, so headed, was formed, and as chance would have it they set forth the following Sunday morning just when Jeb himself set forth to halt the parson on his way to church. The committee caught sight of Jeb turning from the roadside into the bushes and the leader motioned them too into the rhododendron, whispering:

"Wait an' we'll ketch him in some mo' devil-

## THE BATTLE-PRAYER OF PARSON SMALL

ment." In the bushes they waited. Soon the parson hove in view on a slowly pacing nag, with his hands folded on the pommel of his saddle and deep in meditation. Jeb stepped out into the road and the hidden men craned their necks from the bushes with eyes and ears alert.

"Good mornin', Parson Small!" The old nag stopped and the parson's head snapped up from his reverie.

"Good mornin', Jeb Mullins." The parson's greeting was stern and somewhat uneasy, for he did not like the look on old Jeb's face.

"Parson Small," said Jeb unctuously, "las' Sunday was *yo'* day." The men in the bushes thrust themselves farther out—they could hear every word—"an' this Sunday is *mine*."

"Every Sunday is the Lawd's, Jeb Mullins—profane it not."

"Well, mebbe He'll loan me this un, parson. You lambasted me afore all Happy Valley last Sunday an' now I'm a-goin' to lick you fer it." The parson's eye gleamed faintly and subsided.

"I'm on my way to preach the word of God, Jeb Mullins."

"You'll git thar in time, parson. Git off yo' hoss!"

"I've got my broadcloth on, Jeb Mullins, an' I don't want to muss it up—wait till I come back."

## THE BATTLE-PRAYER OF PARSON SMALL

“ You can take it off, parson, or brush off the dust atterwards—climb off yo’ hoss.” Again the parson’s eye gleamed and this time did not subside.

“ I reckon you’ll give me time to say a prayer, Jeb Mullins ! ”

“ Shore—you’ll need it afore I git through with ye.”

With a sigh the parson swung offside from Jeb, dexterously pulling a jack-knife from his trousers-pocket, opening it, and thrusting it in the high top of his right boot. Then he kneeled in the road with uplifted face and eyes closed:

“ O Lawd,” he called sonorously, “ thou knowest that I visit my fellow man with violence only with thy favor and in thy name. Thou knowest that when I laid Jim Thompson an’ Si Marcum in thar graves it was by thy aid. Thou knowest how I disembowelled with my trusty knife the miserable sinner Hank Smith.” Here the parson drew out his knife and began honing it on the leg of his boot. “ An’ hyeh’s another who meddles with thy servant and profanes thy day. I know this hyeh Jeb Mullins is offensive in thy sight an’ fergive me, O Lawd, but I’m a-goin’ to cut his gizzard plum’ out, an’ O Lawd—” Here Parson Small opened one eye and Jeb Mullins did not stand on the order of his going. As he went swiftly up the hill the

## THE BATTLE-PRAYER OF PARSON SMALL

committee sprang from the bushes with haw-haws and taunting yells. At the top of the hill Jeb turned:

“I was a-goin’ anyhow,” he shouted, and with his thumb at his nose he wriggled his fingers at them.

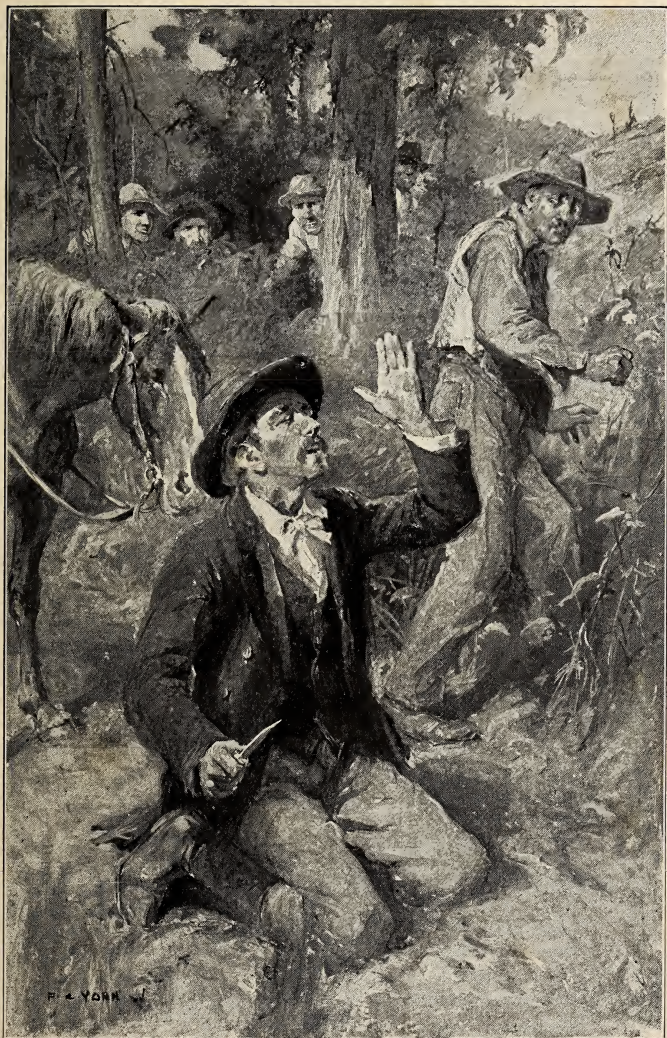
“He’ll never come back now—he’ll be ashamed.”

“Friends,” called the parson, “the Lawd is with me—peace be unto you.” And the committee said:

“Amen!”

The Japanese say: Be not surprised if the surprising does not surprise. When Jeb walked into meeting the following Sunday no citizen of Happy Valley had the subtlety to note that of them all Pleasant Trouble alone, sitting far in the rear, showed no surprise. Pleasant’s face was solemn, but in his eyes was an expectant smile. Women and men glared, and the parson stopped his exhortation to glare, but Jeb had timed his entrance with the parson’s call for sinners to come to the mourners’ bench. It was the only safe place for him and there he went and there he sat. The parson still glared, but he had to go on exhorting—he had to exhort even Jeb. And Jeb responded. He not only “wrassled with the Sperit” valiantly but





“O Lawd . . . hyeh’s another who meddles with thy servant  
and profanes thy day.”





## THE BATTLE-PRAYER OF PARSON SMALL

he "came through"—that is, he burst from the gloom of evil and disbelief into the light of high purpose and the glory of salvation. He rose to confess and he confessed a great deal; but, as many knew, not all—who does? He had driven the woman like Hagar into the wilderness; he would go out right now and the folks of Happy Valley should see him break up his own still with his own hands.

"Praise the Lawd," said the amazed and convinced parson; "lead the way, Brother Mullins." *Brother Mullins!* The smile in Pleasant's eyes almost leaped in a laugh from his open mouth. The congregation rose and, led by Jeb and the parson, started down the road and up a ravine. The parson raised a hymn—"Climbing up Zion's hill." At his shack Jeb caught up an axe which he had left on purpose apparently at his gate, and on they went to see Jeb bruise the head of the serpent and prove his right to enter the fold. With a shout of glory Jeb plunged ahead on a run, disappeared down a thicketed bank, and, as they pushed their way, singing, through the bushes, they could hear him below crashing right and left with his axe, and when they got to him it was nearly all over. Many wondered how he could create such havoc in so short a time, but the boiler was gashed with holes, the worms

## THE BATTLE-PRAYER OF PARSON SMALL

chopped into bits, and the mash-tub was in splinters.

Happy Valley dispersed to dinner. Lum Chapman took the parson and his new-born father-in-law home with him, his wife following with her apron at her eyes, wiping away grateful tears. At sunset Pleasant Trouble swung lightly up Wolf Run on his crutch and called Jeb down to the gate:

“You got a good home now, Jeb.”

“I shore have.” Jeb’s religious ecstasy had died down but he looked content.

The parson was mounting his nag and Pleasant opened the gate for him.

“Hit’s sort o’ curious, parson,” said Jeb, “but when you prayed that prayer jes’ afore I was about to battle with ye I begun to see the errer o’ my ways.”

“The Lawd, Brother Mullins,” said the parson, dryly but sincerely, “moves in mysterious ways his wonders to perform.” The two watched him ride away.

“The new still will be hyeh next week,” said Pleasant out of one corner of his mouth. One solemn wink they exchanged and Pleasant Trouble swung lightly off into the woods.

## THE CHRISTMAS TREE ON PIGEON

THE sun of Christmas poured golden blessings on Happy Valley first; it leaped ten miles of intervening hills and shot winged shafts of yellow light into the mouth of Pigeon; it darted awakening arrows into the coves and hollows on the Head of Pigeon, between Brushy Ridge and Pine Mountain; and one searching ray flashed through the open door of the little log schoolhouse at the forks of Pigeon and played like a smile over the waiting cedar that stood within—alone.

Down at the mines below, the young doctor had not waited the coming of that sun. He had sprung from his bed at dawn, had built his own fire, dressed hurriedly, and gone hurriedly on his rounds, leaving a pill here, a powder there, and a word of good cheer everywhere. That was his Christmas tree, the cedar in the little schoolhouse—his and Hers. The Marquise of Queensberry, he called her—and she was coming up from the Gap that day to dress that tree and spread the joy of Christmas among mountain folks, to whom the joy of Christmas was quite unknown.

## THE CHRISTMAS TREE ON PIGEON

An hour later the passing mail-carrier, from over Black Mountain, stopped with switch up-lifted at his office door.

“Them fellers over the Ridge air comin’ over to shoot up yo’ Christmas tree,” he drawled.

The switch fell and he was gone. The young doctor dropped by his fire—stunned; for just that thing had happened ten years before to the only Christmas tree that had ever been heard of in those immediate hills, except his own. Out of that very schoolhouse some vandals from over Pine Mountain had driven the Pigeon Creek people after a short fight, and while the surprised men, frightened women and children, and the terrified teacher scurried to safety behind rocks and trees had shot the tree to pieces. That was ten years before, but even now, though there were some old men and a few old women who knew the Bible from end to end, many grown people and most of the children had never heard of the Book, or of Christ, or knew that there was a day known as Christmas Day. That such things were so had hurt the doctor to the heart, and that was why, as Christmas drew near, he had gone through the out-of-the-way hollows at the Head of Pigeon and got the names and ages of all the mountain children; why now, long after that silly quarrel with the marquise, he had humbled



## THE CHRISTMAS TREE ON PIGEON

his pride and written her please to come and help him; why she had left the Christmas of Happy Valley in St. Hilda's hands and was coming; and why now the cedar tree stood in the little log schoolhouse at the forks of Pigeon. Moreover, there was yet enmity between the mountaineers of Pigeon and the mountaineers over Pine Mountain, who were jealous and scornful of any signs of the foreign influence but recently come into the hills. The meeting-house, court-house, and the schoolhouse were yet favorite places for fights among the mountaineers. There was yet no reverence at all for Christmas, and the same vandals might yet regard a Christmas tree as an imported frivolity to be sternly rebuked. The news was not only not incredible, it probably was true; and with this conclusion some very unpleasant lines came into the young doctor's kindly face, and he sprang for his horse.

Two hours later he had a burly mountaineer with a Winchester posted on the road leading over Pine Mountain, another on the mountain-side overlooking the little valley, several more similarly armed below, while he and two friends, with revolvers buckled on, waited for the marquise, with their horses hitched in front of his office-door. This Christmas tree was to be.

Meanwhile his mind was busy with memories

## THE CHRISTMAS TREE ON PIGEON

of the previous summer. Once again he was bounding across a brook in a little ravine in Happy Valley to see two young mountaineers in a fierce fight—with his sweetheart and a one-legged man named Pleasant Trouble as referees, and once again that distracted sweetheart was rushing for refuge to his arms. She had got the two youths to fight with fists instead of pistols, and according to such rules of the ring as she could remember, and that was why thereafter he had called her the marquise. Then had come that silly quarrel and, instead of to the altar, she had gone back to Happy Valley to teach again. Now he would see her once more and his hopes were high. Outside he heard the creaking of wheels. A big spring wagon loaded with Christmas things drew up in front of his door and amidst them sat the superintendent's daughter and two girl friends, who shouted cheery greetings to him. He raised his eyes and high above saw the muffled figure of the marquise coming through the snowy bushes down the trail. Behind her rode a man with a crutch across his saddle-bows—Pleasant Trouble, self-made bodyguard to the little teacher: nowhere could she go without him at her heels. Pleasant grinned, and the faces of the lovers, suddenly suffused, made their story quite plain. The doctor lifted her

## THE CHRISTMAS TREE ON PIGEON

from her horse and helped her into the wagon, to meet three pairs of mischievous eyes, so that quite gruffly for him, he said:

“On your way now—and hustle!”

A black-snake whip cracked and up Pigeon the wagon bumped, with the doctor, his two friends, and Pleasant Trouble on horseback alongside; past the long batteries of coke-ovens with grinning darkies, coke-pullers, and loaders idling about them; up the rough road through lanes of snow-covered rhododendrons winding among tall oaks, chestnuts, and hemlocks; through circles and arrows of gold with which the sun splashed the white earth—every cabin that they passed tenantless, for the inmates had gone ahead long ago—and on to the little schoolhouse that sat on a tiny plateau in a small clearing, with snow-tufted bushes of laurel on every side and snowy mountains rising on either hand.

The door was wide open and smoke was curling from the chimney. A few horses and mules were hitched to the bushes near by. Men, boys, and dogs were gathered around a big fire in front of the building; and in a minute women, children, and more dogs poured out of the schoolhouse to watch the coming cavalcade. Since sunrise the motley group had been waiting there, and the tender heart of the little mar-

## THE CHRISTMAS TREE ON PIGEON

quise began to ache: the women thinly clad in dresses of worsted or dark calico, and a shawl or short jacket or man's coat, with a sunbonnet or "fascinator" on their heads, and men's shoes on their feet—the older ones stooped and thin, the younger ones carrying babies, and all with weather-beaten faces and bared hands; the men and boys without overcoats, their coarse shirts unbuttoned, their necks and upper chests bared to the biting cold, their hands thrust in their pockets as they stood about the fire, and below their short coat-sleeves their wrists showing chapped and red; while to the little boys and girls had fallen only such odds and ends of clothing as the older ones could spare. Quickly the doctor got his party indoors and to work on the Christmas tree. Not one did he tell of the impending danger, and the Colt's .45 bulging under this man's shoulder or on that man's hip, and the Winchester in the hollow of an arm here and there were sights too common in those hills to arouse suspicion in anybody's mind. The cedar-tree, shorn of its branches at the base and banked with mosses, towered to the angle of the roof. There were no desks in the room except the one table once used by the teacher. Long, crude wooden benches with low backs faced the tree, with an aisle leading from the door between them. Lap-robcs were hung over

## THE CHRISTMAS TREE ON PIGEON

the windows, and soon a gorgeous figure of Santa Claus was smiling down from the very tiptop of the tree. With her flushed face, eager eyes, and golden hair the busy marquise looked like its patron saint. Ropes of gold and silver tinsel were swiftly draped around and up and down; enmeshed in these were little red Santas, gayly colored paper horns filled with candy, colored balls, white and yellow birds, little colored candles with holders to match, and other glittering things; while over the whole tree a glistening powder was sprinkled like a mist of shining snow. Many presents were tied to the tree, and under it were the rest of the labelled ones in a big pile. In a semicircle about the base sat the dolls in pink, yellow, and blue, and looking down the aisle to the door. Packages of candy in colored Japanese napkins and tied with a narrow red ribbon were in another pile, with a pyramid of oranges at its foot. And yet there was still another pile for unexpected children, that the heart of none should be sore. Then the candles were lighted and the door flung open to the eager waiting crowd outside. In a moment every seat was silently filled by the women and children, and the men, stolid but expectant, lined the wall. The like of that tree no soul of them had ever seen before. Only a few of the older ones had



## THE CHRISTMAS TREE ON PIGEON

ever seen a Christmas tree of any kind, and they but one; and they had lost that in a free-for-all fight. And yet only the eyes of them showed surprise or pleasure. There was no word—no smile, only unwavering eyes mesmerically fixed on that wonderful tree.

The young doctor rose, and only the marquise saw and wondered that he was nervous, restless, and pale. As best he could he told them what Christmas was and what it meant to the world; and he had scarcely finished when a hand beckoned to him from the door. Leaving one of his friends to distribute the presents, he went outside to discover that one vandal had come on ahead, drunk and boisterous. Promptly the doctor tied him to a tree and, leaving Pleasant Trouble to guard him, shouldered a Winchester and himself took up a lonely vigil on the mountainside. Within, Christmas went on. When a name was called a child came forward silently, usually shoved to the front by some relative, took what was handed to it, and, dumb with delight, but too shy even to murmur a word of thanks, silently returned to its seat with the presents hugged to its breast—presents that were simple, but not to those mountain mites: colored pictures and illustrated books they were, red plush albums, simple games, fascinators, and mittens for the girls;

## THE CHRISTMAS TREE ON PIGEON

pocket-knives, balls, firecrackers, horns, mittens, caps, and mufflers for the boys; a doll dressed in everything a doll should wear for each little girl, no one of whom had ever seen a doll before, except what was home-made from an old dress or apron tied in several knots to make the head and body. Twice only was the silence broken. One boy quite forgot himself when given a pocket-knife. He looked at it suspiciously and incredulously, turned it over in his hand, opened it and felt the edge of the blade, and, panting with excitement, cried:

“ Hit’s a shore ’nough knife ! ”

And again when, to make sure that nobody had been left out, though all the presents were gone, the master of ceremonies asked if there was any other little boy or girl who had received nothing, there arose a bent, toothless old woman in a calico dress and baggy black coat, her gray hair straggling from under her black sunbonnet and her hands gnarled and knotted from work and rheumatism. Simply as a child she spoke:

“ I ain’t got nothin’ . ”

Gravely the giver of the gifts asked her to come forward, and while, nonplussed, he searched the tree for the most glittering thing he could find, a tiny gold safety-pin was thrust into his hand, the whiter hollow of the mar-

## THE CHRISTMAS TREE ON PIGEON

quise's white throat became visible, and that old woman was made till death the proudest in the hills. Then all the women pressed forward and then the men, until all the ornaments were gone, even the half-burned candles with their colored holders, which the men took eagerly and fastened in their coats, clasping the holders to their lapels or fastening the bent wire in their buttonholes, and pieces of tinsel rope, which they threw over their shoulders—so that the tree stood at last just as it was when brought from the wild woods outside.

Straightway then the young doctor hurried the departure of the merry-makers. Already the horses stood hitched, and, while the lap-ropes were being carried out, a mountaineer who had brought along a sack of apples lined up the men and boys, and at a given word started running down the road, pouring out the apples as he ran while the men and boys scrambled for them, rolling and tussling in the snow.

Just then a fusillade of shots rang from the top of the mountain, but nobody paid any heed. As the party moved away, the mountaineers waved their hands and shouted good-bye to the doctor, too shy still to pay much heed to the other "furriners" in the wagon. The doctor looked back once with a grateful sigh of relief, but no one in the wagon knew that

## THE CHRISTMAS TREE ON PIGEON

there had been any danger that day. How great the danger had been not even the doctor knew till Pleasant Trouble galloped up and whispered behind his hand: the coming vandals had got as far as the top of the dividing ridge, had there quarrelled and fought among themselves, so that, as the party drove away, one invader was at the minute cursing his captors, who were setting him free, and high upon the ridge another lay dead in the snow.

That night the doctor and the marquise, well muffled against the cold, sat on the porch of the superintendent's bungalow while the daughter sat discreetly inside. The flame-light of the ovens licked the snowy ravine above and below; it was their first chance for a talk, and they had it out to the happy end.

"You see," said the doctor, "there is even more to do over here than in Happy Valley."

"There is much to do everywhere in these hills," said the marquise.

"And *I* need you—oh, how I do need you!" Most untimely, the daughter appeared at the door.

"Then you shall have me," whispered the marquise.

"Bedtime!" called the girl, and only with his eyes—just then—could the doctor kiss the little marquise. But the next morning, when

## THE CHRISTMAS TREE ON PIGEON

he went with her as far as the top of the mountain and Pleasant Trouble rode whistling ahead, he had better luck.

“When?” he asked.

“Not till June,” she said firmly. And again he asked:

“When?”

“Oh, about two o’clock,” smiled the marquis.

“The first two o’clock?”

“Too early!”

“The second,” he said decidedly. For answer the marquis leaned from her saddle toward him and he kissed her again.

Later, by just five months and one week, the doctor mounted his horse for Happy Valley. He had to go up Pigeon, and riding by the little schoolhouse, he stopped at the door and from his horse pushed it open. The Christmas tree stood just as he had left it on Christmas Day, only, like the evergreens on the wall and over the windows, it too was brown, withered, and dry. Gently he closed the door and rode on. And on the clock-stroke of two in Happy Valley there was a wedding that blessed first June afternoon.

















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